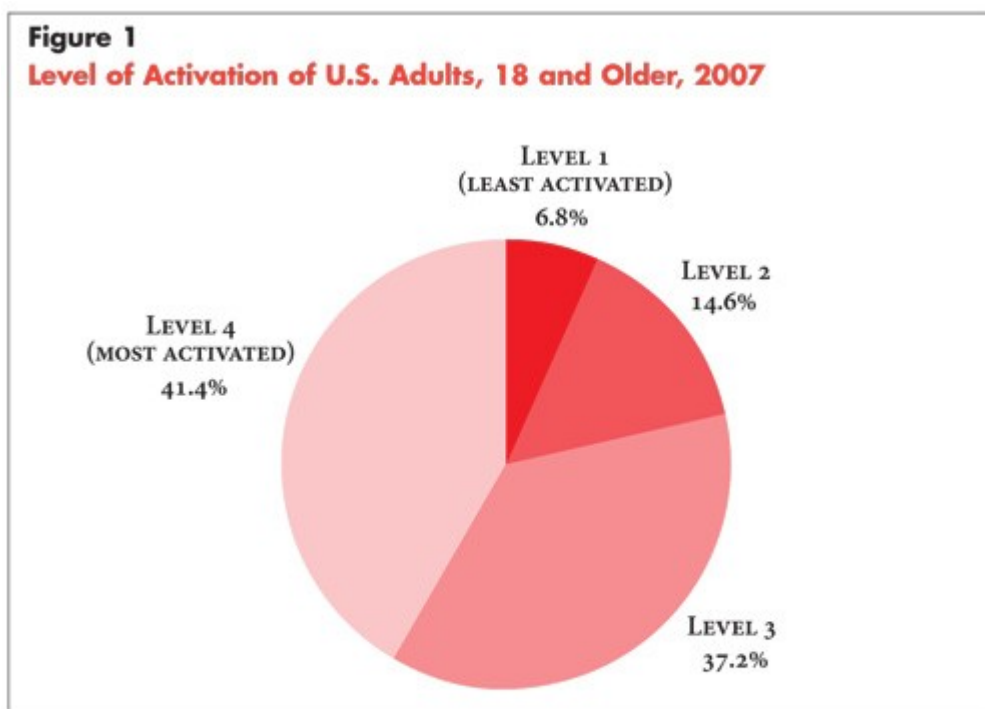


The consumer is key to health care reform efforts! “There is a growing consensus that activating and engaging consumers is an essential component to health care reform in the United States” (The Center for Studying Health System Change, October 2008). What characterizes an informed, activated patient? According to the Improving Chronic Care Organization ([www.improvingchroniccare.org](http://www.improvingchroniccare.org)), activated patients have motivation, information, skills, and confidence necessary to effectively make decisions about their health and managing it. The Center for Studying Health System Change (HSC) suggests “patient activation refers to a person’s ability to manage their health and health care” ( <http://e-patients.net/archives/2008/10/41-of-adults-are-activated-patients.html>).

Data collected by HSC suggest that “activation levels are especially low for people with low incomes, less education, Medicaid enrollees, and people with poor self-reported health. Higher activation levels are associated with much lower levels of unmet need for medical care and greater support from health care providers for self-management of chronic conditions.”



Note: Four levels of patient activation have been identified through the Patient Activation Measure (PAM). At Level 1, the least-activated level, people tend to be passive and may not feel confident enough to play an active role in their own health. At Level 2, people may lack basic knowledge and confidence in their ability to manage their health. At Level 3, people appear to be taking some action but may still lack confidence and skill to support all necessary behaviors. At Level 4, the most-activated level, people have adopted many of the behaviors to support their health but may not be able to maintain them in the face of life stressors.

Source: HSC 2007 Health Tracking Household Survey

Further information about the about the activation levels of various population groups and their health status characteristics can be found at <http://www.hschange.com/CONTENT/1019/>

“While there are sharp differences between advocates of a strong government role in health care reform and those who believe reform should be achieved primarily through the private sector, most health care reformers at least acknowledge that improvements in quality, cost containment and reductions in low-value care will not occur without more informed and engaged consumers and patients. Payment reform and structural changes to care delivery only address one side of the equation. The other side is consumers and patients becoming more informed decision-makers and managers of their health” \*HSC)

It is suggested “that more highly activated patients have greater success in navigating a highly complex and often confusing health care system. For example, people with chronic conditions who are at lower levels of activation are much more likely to report unmet medical needs, to delay care and to have unmet prescription drug needs. Less activated people are also somewhat less likely to have a usual source of care. These differences remain even after controlling for socioeconomic and health status and likely reflect the more passive approach that people at lower levels of activation often take in managing their health. These findings also may indicate that those who are less activated are more vulnerable to barriers to care and are more easily dissuaded from taking action when faced with financial or health system barriers” (HSC).

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Upcoming presentations at St. Luke’s Community Health Education Center) that may be of interest to WWURA members and friends:

September 20 (6:30 – 8 pm): Cindy Brinn: Registered Dietitian with PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center

September 27 (6:30- 8 pm): Dr. Peter Beglin: cardiologist with PeaceHealth St. Joseph's North Cascade Cardiology

October 20 (6:30 – 8pm): Dr. James Holstine: orthopedic surgeon and medical director of the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Joint Replacement Center.