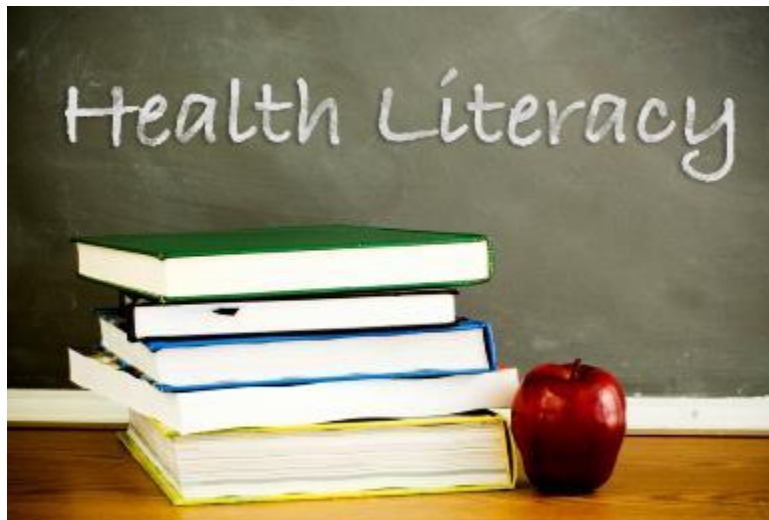


# HEALTH LITERACY

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Health literacy is a stronger predictor of an individual's health status than

- income
- employment status
- education level
- racial or ethnic group

# Definition

People's knowledge, motivation and competences to access, understand, evaluate and use health information in order to make judgements and take decisions concerning health care, disease prevention and health promotion

*European Health Literacy Consortium (2012)*

# Components

<b>Health literacy</b>	<b>Access or obtain information relevant to health</b>	<b>Understand information relevant to health</b>	<b>Appraise, judge or evaluate information relevant to health</b>	<b>Apply or use information relevant to health</b>
<b>Health care</b>	<b>1)</b> Ability to access information on medical or clinical issues	<b>2)</b> Ability to understand medical information and derive meaning	<b>3)</b> Ability to interpret and evaluate medical information	<b>4)</b> Ability to make informed decisions on medical issues
<b>Disease prevention</b>	<b>5)</b> Ability to access information on risk factors	<b>6)</b> Ability to understand information on risk factors and derive meaning	<b>7)</b> Ability to interpret and evaluate information on risk factors	<b>8)</b> Ability to judge the relevance of the information on risk factors
<b>Health promotion</b>	<b>9)</b> Ability to update oneself on health issues	<b>10)</b> Ability to understand health-related information and derive meaning	<b>11)</b> Ability to interpret and evaluate information on health-related issues	<b>12)</b> Ability to form a reflected opinion on health issues

# Includes

understanding what doctors say



assessing whether health information  
in the mass media is reliable



# Includes

understanding information on prescriptions and medication

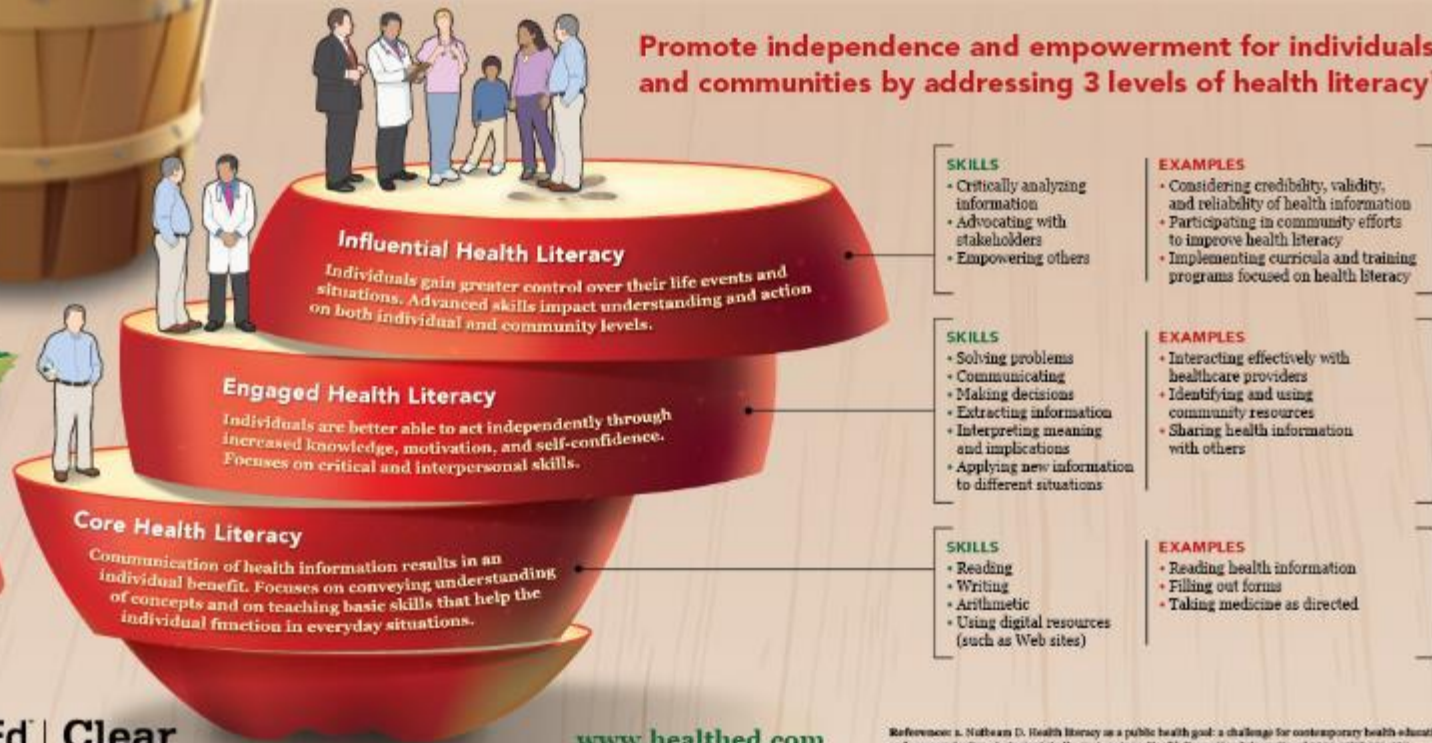


understanding information on food packaging

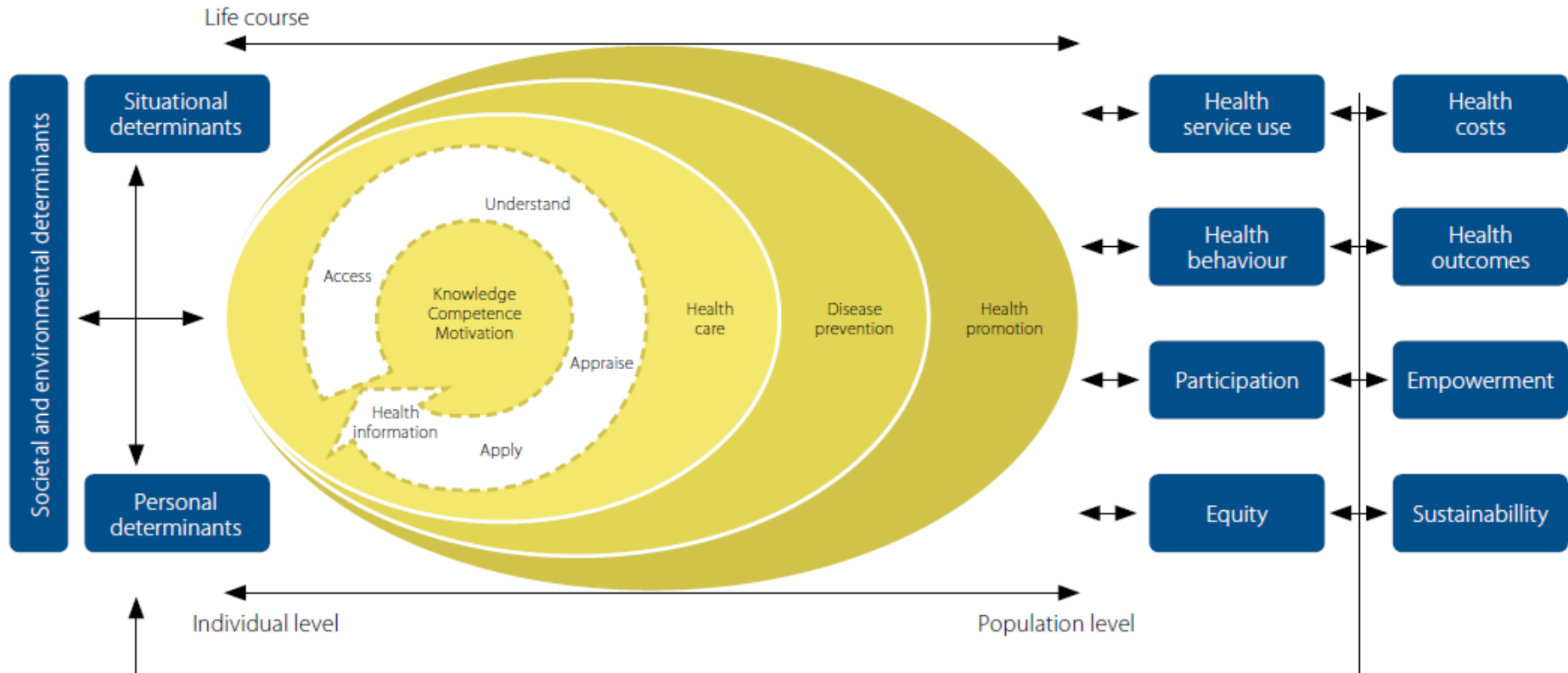


# Health Literacy: Moving Beyond the Core

Promote independence and empowerment for individuals and communities by addressing 3 levels of health literacy<sup>1</sup>



# Conceptual model of HL





# Importance

- every individual confront health decisions
- people are challenged to make healthy lifestyle choices
- health care systems are increasingly difficult to navigate
- medical terminology is hard to understand
- education systems fail to equip people with HL skills

# modern societies market

unhealthy products



unhealthy lifestyles



# Importance

- empowers and enables people to make sound health decisions
- influences self-assessed health
- builds resilience among individuals and communities

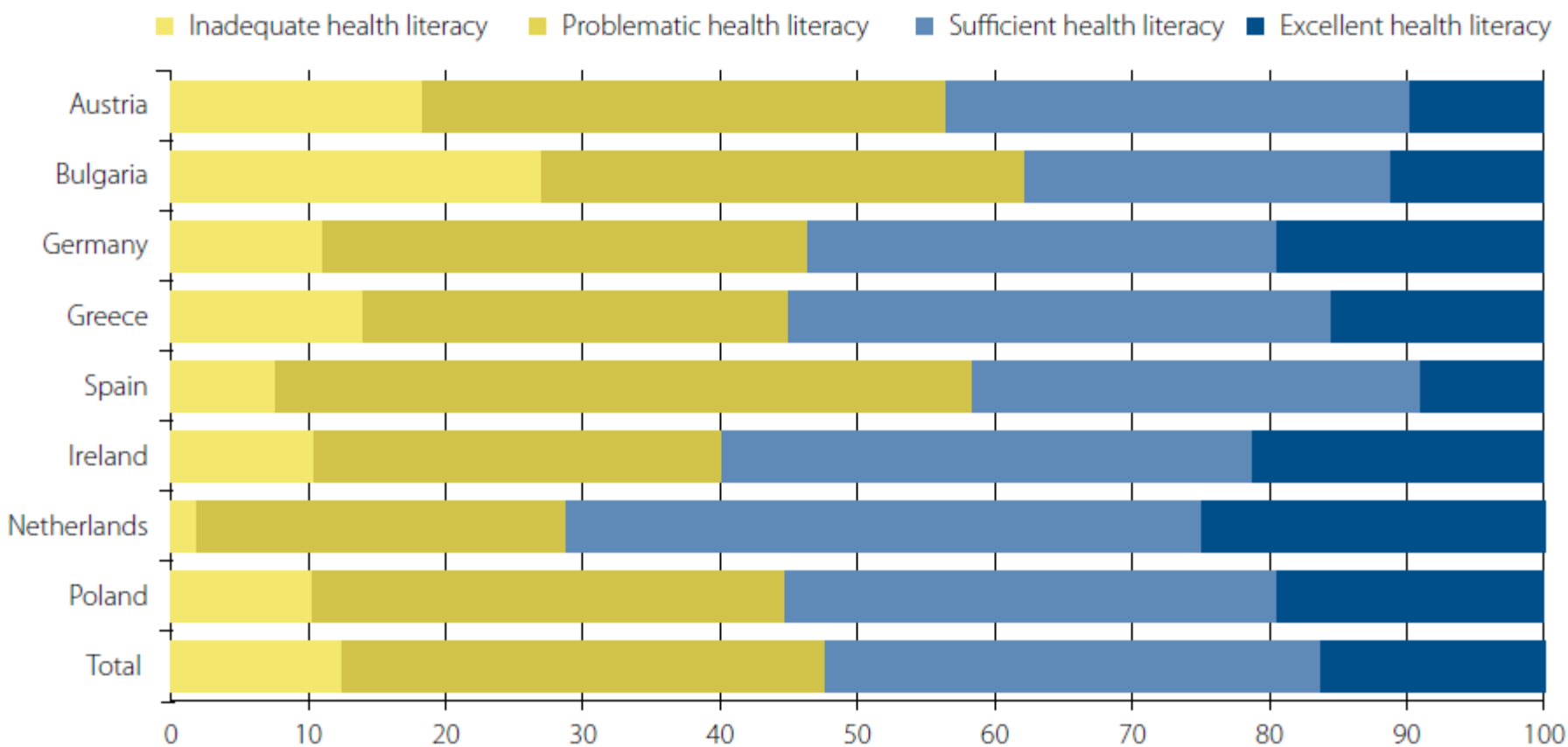


# Inadequate HL

- riskier health choices (higher smoking rates)
- more work accidents
- diminished management of chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes)
- poor adherence to medication
- increased hospitalization and rehospitalization
- higher health system costs
- increased morbidity and premature death

# Surveys indicate limited HL levels

Nearly half of adults in European countries have limited health literacy skills



# How to enhance HL?

- multiple stakeholders need to be involved (is not only the responsibility of the health sector)
- cooperation among stakeholders necessary
- initiatives to build HL must be grounded in the settings of everyday life
- plain-language initiatives need to be developed
- investment in measurement and research is needed

# Major stakeholders



# Libraries as stakeholders

- providing meaningful and reliable health information
- introducing health information materials which are sensitive to differences and diversity in cultures, gender and age
- introducing OA health sources
- providing sources to help with understanding medical terminology
- teaching how to find and where to find health information (introducing appropriate databases, websites etc.)
- teaching how to evaluate credentials of information sources (media, web, print, etc.)



# Connection with IL

- IL is a set of skills to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand



**HL = IL + health context**

- libraries have a long tradition to teach IL skills
- they can help with developing HL skills

# Thanks

**HEALTH**  
LITERACY  
**MONTH**  
OCTOBER 2013

