# 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)

## Compenents

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

#### Influential Health Literacy

Individuals gain greater control over their life events and situations. Advanced skills impact understanding and action on both individual and community levels.

#### **Engaged Health Literacy**

Individuals are better able to act independently through increased knowledge, motivation, and self-confidence. Focuses on critical and interpersonal skills.

#### **Core Health Literacy**

Communication of health information results in an individual benefit. Focuses on conveying understanding of concepts and on teaching basic skills that help the individual function in everyday situations.

Health Ed" Clear Ourse Health Ed Group, Inc.

www.healthed.com

SKILLS - Critically analyzing information - Advocating with stakeholders - Empowering others

#### SKILLS

 Solving problems
 Communicating
 Making decisions
 Extracting information
 Interpreting meaning and implications
 Applying new information to different situations

#### SKILLS

Reading
 Writing
 Arithmetic
 Using digital resources
 (such as Web sites)

#### EXAMPLES

 Considering credibility, validity, and reliability of health information Participating in community efforts to improve health literacy
 Implementing curricula and training programs focused on health literacy

#### EXAMPLES

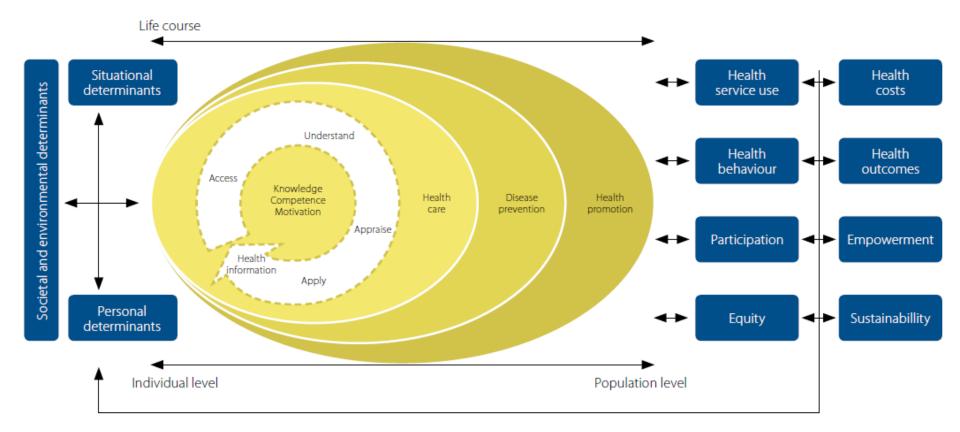
Interacting effectively with healthcare providers Identifying and using community resources Sharing health information with others

#### EXAMPLES

- Reading health information
  Filling out forms
- Taking medicine as directed

Reference: a. Natheam D. Health literacy as a public health goal: a challenge for contemporary health education and communication strategies into the gust century. *Realth Properties International*,2000;19(5):259-507.

## Conceptual model of HL



#### Importance

- every individual confront health decisions
- people are challedged 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 producs

#### unhealthy lifestyles





## Importance

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

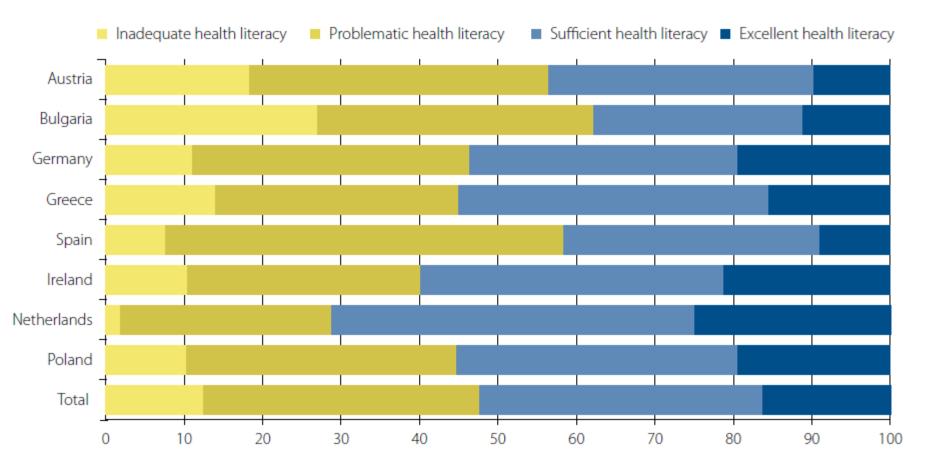
#### Health Literacy MATTERS for all of us

### 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

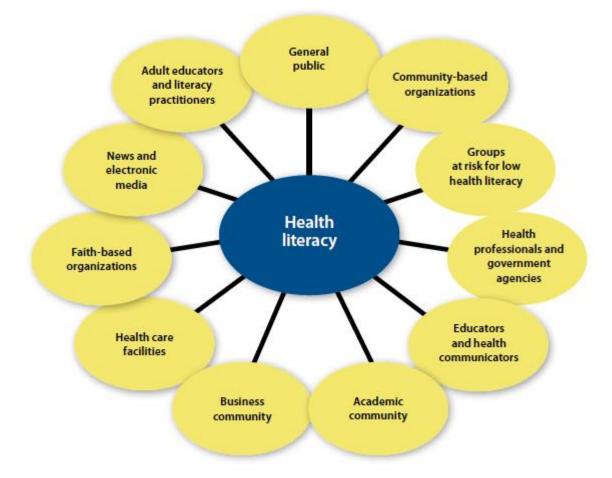
# Nearly half of adults in European countries have limited health literacy skills



### 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



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

## Thanks

