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

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

**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 teaching basic skills that help the individual function in everyday situations.

**SKILLS**
- Critical analysis of information
- Advocating with stakeholders
- Empowering others

**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

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

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

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

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


www.healthed.com
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

- Adult educators and literacy practitioners
- General public
- Community-based organizations
- Groups at risk for low health literacy
- Health professionals and government agencies
- Educators and health communicators
- Academic community
- Business community
- Health care facilities
- Faith-based organizations
- News and electronic media
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

HL = IL + health context

• they can help with developing HL skills
Thanks