Looking over or tearing down the wall: tapping into the unleashed potential of improving health literacy

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Health Literacy
From clinical challenge to global movement

Commentary

Health literacy and social change: exploring networks and interests groups shaping the rising global health literacy movement
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Abstract: Limited health literacy is a neglected public health challenge in many countries. To bridge the gap, various interest groups, coalitions and networks have increasingly been formed. This study aimed to scope the formation of health literacy groups, coalitions and networks to map their existence and to discuss whether an actual global health literacy movement is under development. The internet was searched, particularly using Google, LinkedIn and Twitter. The 66 identified entities were categorised and analysed according to their target group, geographical origin, member profile, aim, year of establishment and communication platform. The study revealed a vibrant worldwide health literacy community driving the rise of an emerging global health literacy movement for social change towards empowerment and health equity. Time will show whether health literacy will successfully become mainstream or fade out without impact.

Keywords: health literacy, network, social movement, social change, global health

Introduction

Health literacy empowers and drives equity (1). It entails the knowledge, motivation, and competency to access, understand, appraise and apply information to form judgement and make decisions in terms of healthcare, disease prevention, and health promotion to maintain and improve quality collective actions. This study aimed to scope the formation of health literacy groups, coalitions and networks to map their existence and to discuss whether an actual global health literacy movement is under rise.

Characteristics of health literacy interest

Health literacy
Bonjour
Bonjour
Bonjour
1er année
3ème année
5ème année
Docteur junior
Docteur senior
Spécialiste
A challenge...
What is health literacy?

Health literacy is linked to literacy and entails people’s knowledge, motivation and competencies to access, understand, appraise and apply information to form judgment and take decisions in everyday life in terms of healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain and improve quality of life during the life course.
Health literacy measurement

• Screening tools
• Research tools
• Specific focus
• Functional, interactive and critical health literacy
• Comprehensive health literacy
### The matrix with four dimensions of health literacy applied to three health domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Access/obtain information relevant to health</th>
<th>Understand information relevant to health</th>
<th>Process/appraise information relevant to health</th>
<th>Apply/use information relevant to health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health care</strong></td>
<td>Ability to access information on medical or clinical issues</td>
<td>Ability to understand medical information and derive meaning</td>
<td>Ability to interpret and evaluate medical information</td>
<td>Ability to make informed decisions on medical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disease prevention</strong></td>
<td>Ability to access information on risk factors for health</td>
<td>Ability to understand information on risk factors and derive meaning</td>
<td>Ability to interpret and evaluate information on risk factors for health</td>
<td>Ability to make informed decisions on risk factors for health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health promotion</strong></td>
<td>Ability to update oneself on determinants of health in the social and physical environment</td>
<td>Ability to understand information on determinants of health in the social and physical environment and derive meaning</td>
<td>Ability to interpret and evaluate information on health determinants in the social and physical environment</td>
<td>Ability to make informed decisions on health determinants in the social and physical environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The European health literacy survey (HLS-EU)

Sørensen et al., 2015
BRIDGING THE GAP OF LIMITED HEALTH LITERACY

Global Health Literacy Academy

www.globalhealthliteracyacademy.org
Looking over the walls
What is health literacy?

Health Literacy is:

- Your health
- Health & health care information
- Your health decisions
- Making decisions together
- Taking health action
- Feeling good about your health

www.safetyandquality.gov.au
What is health literacy?

Health Literacy has 2 components:

1. **Health literacy environment**
   The health literacy environment includes all the areas that make up the health system and have an impact on the way in which people use it. It includes the infrastructure, policies, processes, accessible materials and the people you meet and relationships you form when using the health system.

2. **Health literacy individual**
   Individual health literacy is the motivation and capacity of a person to access, understand, appraise and apply the available information to make health related decisions.
Why health literacy is important

Low health literacy increases the risk of:

- Serious illness
- Needing emergency care
- Mismanaging medication
- Poor health in old people
- Not getting the flu vaccine
- Not understanding diseases & conditions
- Being hospitalised

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Health literacy in Australia

Australian's overall health literacy

60% Low level

40% Adequate level

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Health literacy for consumers

60% PEOPLE LOW HEALTH LITERACY

Having low health literacy means someone doesn’t have the knowledge they need to find, understand and use information about their health and health care.

seek information
ask for information
join support groups

what can I do... to understand my health better?

educate yourself
prepare & ask questions
bring relatives or friends to appointments
ask for things to be explained differently
request an interpreter

be open and honest
ask about your options

#1 talk about your values & preferences
speak up if you are unhappy with your care
give all your medical details

www.safetyandquality.gov.au
Health literacy for clinicians

60% of people have low health literacy. Having low health literacy means your patients don't have the knowledge they need to find, understand and use information about their health and health care. You can help change this.

Know your patients
- Don't assume understanding
- Listen
- Talk about decisions
- Your decisions

Ensure understanding
- Invite patient’s support person
- Encourage questions
- Ask patients to repeat information

Consider how you present information
- Tailor information
- Try different formats
- Decision making tools

How can I help my patients understand their health better?

Improve your health service
- Education & training
- Improvement activities

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Health literacy for managers

60% PEOPLE LOW HEALTH LITERACY

Having low health literacy means consumers don't have the knowledge they need to find, understand and use information about their health and health care. You can help change this.

How can I CREATE A GOOD HEALTH LITERACY ENVIRONMENT within my organisation?

BE A LEADER

KEY FOCUS
Make patient-centred care and health literacy a key focus within the strategic framework of your organisation

USE EXAMPLES
Use patient stories to demonstrate how health literacy affects people's health and healthcare

CLEAR COMMUNICATION
Make clear and effective communication a priority across all levels of the organisation

PUT SYSTEMS IN PLACE

EDUCATION & TRAINING
Incorporate health literacy and communication strategies into information, education and training sessions for the workforce

PROCESSES
Develop and implement whole-of-organisation policies which embed health literacy considerations into existing processes

LANGUAGE
Use easily understood language and symbols on information and signage

CONSUMER SUPPORT
Have processes in place to provide support for consumers with additional needs - interpreters, accessible lifts, etc

PARTNER WITH CONSUMERS

INFORMATION CO-DESIGN
Work with consumers to develop, design and evaluate information materials - brochures, forms, referrals, etc

SERVICE CO-DESIGN
Work with consumers to plan, design and evaluate services and facilities

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patients with low HEALTH LITERACY...

- Are more likely to visit an EMERGENCY ROOM
- Have more HOSPITAL STAYS
- Are less likely to follow TREATMENT PLANS
- Have higher MORTALITY RATES

www.cdc.gov/phpr
Shanghai Declaration on promoting health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Draft WHO European roadmap for implementation of health literacy initiatives through the life course

The present document outlines the draft WHO European roadmap for implementation of health literacy initiatives through the life course to guide Member States and the WHO Regional Office for Europe in their efforts to enhance health literacy in the WHO European Region. It builds on ongoing health-literacy-oriented regional initiatives and emerging interest among WHO Member States for expanding and/or strengthening health literacy in the Region, and charts possible ways of achieving more closely integrated, purpose-oriented and evidence-based health literacy action.

The document was informed by suggestions gathered from Member States during the second, third and fourth sessions of the Twenty-sixth Standing Committee of the Regional Committee for Europe in December 2018, March 2019 and May 2019, respectively, as well as by technical consultations with experts held in April 2019 and a web-based consultation with Member States in June 2019.

The draft roadmap is submitted to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe for consideration at its 69th session, together with a draft resolution on this topic.

Draft resolution

Towards the implementation of health literacy initiatives through the life course

The Regional Committee,
Each stop on the Argyll line travelling East represents a drop of 1.7 years in male life expectancy

Males - 75.8y
Females - 83.1y

Life expectancy data refers to 2001-5 and was extracted from the GCPH community health and well-being profiles. Adapted from the SPT travel map by Gerry McCartney.
One road, two different worlds...
Looking over the wall II
Ideal guest experience
Finding information
Personalized hospitality
Simplicity and user-friendly
Do it your-self, cheap, and empowered
Tailor-made and convenient
Motivation: Just do it!
Lego: on the brink of bankruptcy

- One-way communication
- We know best
- Rigor systems
- No flexibility
- Almost bankrupt
- System-lead activities
People-centred

- Listen; dialogue
- Customer-centred
- Relentless focus on customers’ need
- Monitoring sale and production
- More value for money, no waste
- Co-creation of products
Transforming health systems

- One-way communication
- We know best
- Rigor systems
- No flexibility
- Almost bankrupt
- System-lead activities

- Listen; dialogue
- Patient-centered
- Focus on patient’s and citizen’s need
- Monitoring
- More value for money, reducing waste
- Co-creation of health
No one size fits all
Tapping into the unleashed potential: a health literate prevention research agenda

1. Social gradient
2. Access to information
3. Understanding information
4. Ideal experience and satisfaction
5. Personalize efforts
6. Tailormade service, convenient
7. Simplicity and user-friendly
8. Motivation
9. Do it yourself, selfcare
10. Flourish
Face the challenge, be the change!

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Book release

International Handbook of Health Literacy
Research, practice and policy across the life-span

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