Health Literacy:

Concepts

State of the art

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NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Type II Diabetes onset (USA, 1988): 52.0 years

BEFORE

Life expectancy (USA, 1988): 74.77 years


TODAY

Life expectancy (USA, 2000): 76.6 years

NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES \(\rightarrow\) Type II Diabetes onset (USA, 2000): 46.0 years
OTTAWA CHARTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTION 1986

- Strengthen Community Action
- Develop Personal Skills
- Enable Mediation
- Advocate
- Build Healthy Public Policy
- Create Supportive Environment

Shanghai Declaration on promoting health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
4. Quality education
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
Literacy and Numeracy are both skills needed in order to function in daily life.

**Literacy**

“The capacities of processing written information in daily life.”


The concept of literacy appears under 2 perspectives:

1. The ability to read and write
2. Having knowledge or competence, thus displaying advanced education

**Numeracy**

“The ability to use mathematics in everyday life.”

- Being numerate is as much about thinking and reasoning logically as about “doing sums”.

Numeracy complements literacy.
Some definitions of health literacy

**Literacy** (L) refers to basic skills needed to succeed in society, while health literacy requires some **additional skills**, including those necessary for finding, evaluating and integrating health information from a variety of contexts. (Rootman, I., 2009)

“Health literacy implies the achievement of a level of **knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community health by changing personal lifestyles and living conditions**” (to promote and maintain good health across the life-course). (Nutbeam, 1998, p. 264)
What is Health Literacy?

HL is the ability to make sound health decisions in the context of everyday life... It is a critical empowerment strategy ... (Kickbusch, I. et al., 2005)

It requires motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem, critical capacity, perception of control and intentions to act (Hubley, 2005).

It requires effective communication, trust, meaning and opportunity.
Health literacy is the combination of personal competencies and situational resources needed for people to access, understand, appraise and use information and services to make decisions about health. It includes the capacity to communicate, assert and act upon these decisions. (IUHPE, 2018).

It requires “ways of reducing the situational demands and complexity in which an individual makes a health decision.” (Nutbeam, Levin-Zamir, Rowlands, 2018)
AND THEY THOUGHT TOBACCO WAS KILLING US!
The evolution of the concept of HL

The concept of HL has expanded in meaning to include (Sorenson, et al, 2012):

✓ information-seeking,
✓ decision-making,
✓ problem-solving,
✓ critical thinking,
✓ communication,
✓ a multitude of social, personal, and cognitive skills that are imperative to function in the health-system.

And in the environment of daily life

But also the understanding of social determinants of health and how to tackle them (critical health literacy) – health citizenship (IUHPE, 2018)
Health literacy is required for...

- Access and utilization of health care
- Interacting with health service providers
- Caring for one's own health and the health of others
- Participating in health debates and decision making

Largely in community settings
Largely clinical settings

Why health literacy matters

• Limited literacy is ... a more powerful **predictor of health status** than race or education (Volandes, Paasche-Orlow, 2007).

• Limited literacy is associated with **limited participation** in health promotion and management of long term chronic diseases (Rudd, Groene, Navarro-Rubio, 2013).

• People **deserve** clear communication.

• People **deserve to be healthy**
Poor health literacy and health costs

Adults with limited health literacy have (Institute of Medicine, 2004)

• Less knowledge of disease management
• Less knowledge of health promoting behaviors
• Report poorer health status
• Less likely to use preventive services
• Higher use of emergency services
• Higher rate of hospitalizations
• Inpatient spending is $993 higher than that of persons with adequate health literacy.

HL is a public health imperative
How do emerge health literacy needs?

“Although the literacy and verbal skills of individuals are of critical importance, so too are the demands made by the health materials themselves, the communication skills of those in the health field, and the complicated nature of the healthcare and public health systems.” (Rima Rudd, 2003)

I want you to lose 15 kg and stop smoking. Then I want you to come back (and tell me how the hell did you do that)
In the 2017 OECD Health Ministerial Statement, ministers agreed on the importance of addressing health literacy barriers to help health systems become more people centered.
Health care model for chronic patients

Community Resources and policies

Health care systems
Organization of health care

Support to self-management
Health care delivery model
Support to decision
Systems of clinical information

Productive interactions

Informed and active patient

Proactive and ready local health team

Better Results

Person-centered approach

- **Addressing the needs of the patient from their lens** (cultural beliefs/practices, language, health literacy)

- **Understanding the context** (demographics, health disparities, costs, legislative authorities/policies, accreditation bodies and literature are drivers for the **delivery of cultural competent care**). (Guadalupe Pacheco, 2015)

People with low HL experience difficulties in speaking in consultations, and may hide these difficulties due to stigma (Easton, Entwistle and Williams, 2013)

Also, people need to feel they have power to act.

**Help** individuals become partners in co-production of health
Responsiveness

Definition:
1. Perception of the cue
2. Accurate interpretation of the cue

Promote a culture of responsiveness!
Health literacy responsiveness

“The provision of services, programs and information in ways that **promote equitable access** and **engagement**, that meet the diverse health literacy **needs** and **preferences** of individuals, families and communities, and that **support people to participate in decisions regarding their health and social wellbeing.**”

10 attributes of a health literate organization

**Leadership promotes**
Has leadership that makes health literacy integral to its mission, structure and operations

**Plans, evaluates and improves**
Integrates health literacy into planning, evaluation measures, patient safety and quality improvement

**Prepares workforce**
Prepares the workforce to be health literate and monitors progress

**Ensures easy access**
Provides easy access to health information and services and navigation assistance

**Communicates effectively**
Uses health-literacy strategies in interpersonal communication and confirms understanding at all points of contact

**Includes consumers**
Includes populations served in designing, implementing and evaluating health information and services

**Meets everyone's needs**
Meets the needs of populations with a range of health literacy skills while avoiding stigmatization

**Designs easy-to-use materials**
Designs and distributes print, audiovisual and social media content that is easy to understand and act on

**Targets high risk**
Addresses health literacy in high-risk situations, including care transitions and communication about medicines

**Explains coverage and costs**
Communicates clearly what health plans cover and what individuals will have to pay for services

How health literate are we?

Where do we need to go?
What do we need to do?
How?
Proportion of individuals with low HL levels, selected OECD countries

Note: 1) Due to the use of different surveys to measure HL, the data is not comparable across countries. 2) The meaning of poor health literacy differs according to the survey applied. For the purpose of this graph, poor health literacy represents all levels below the sufficient or basic level as defined in each survey.

Nowadays it can be a waste of resources in building questionnaires just to compare among countries instead of investing in **tools to evaluate the effectiveness** of Health Promotion interventions.
General health literacy levels

6th place in 9, 1st country < mean HLS-EU

Very vulnerable groups

- Aged 66 years or over
- With monthly incomes of 500€ or less
- With a ‘bad’ self-assessment of their health
- Widow(er)s
- Factory workers
- With lengthy illnesses
- Who feel themselves to be limited because they have one or more chronic illnesses
- Who are retired
- Who resorted to primary healthcare facilities 6 or more times in the last year


And has it been object of attention and responsiveness by the health services?
How to raise HL in society?
How to raise HL in society?

**Education is to be able to teach how to think** (Dewey & Freire)

and how to manage emotions

- Starting early life
- Through lifelong
- Different contexts and assets
- Nurseries, capacity building parenthood, schools, work place,
- Investment in cultural life, through policies
- Promote arts
- Make health services competent and responsive
- Transformative society to change the determinants of health-related behavior
How active learning is important

Bloom’s taxonomy, which describes cognitive tasks in ascending orders of complexity, appears to be supported by neuroscience research. Recruiting volitional control, memory, and emotions through active learning techniques increases performance.

Brain image by Louis496 [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.
Health education and empowerment
The percentage of people seeking health-related information online is increasing in all countries, 2008 and 2017

Source: OECD/EU (2018), based on Eurostat database with data from the European ICT survey of individuals aged 17-74
Health literacy for people-centred care (Moreira, L. - OECD, 2018)

- Include health literacy education in the curricula as early as possible.
- Promote on-the-job training on health communication.
- Encourage health at school so that individuals receive health education as early as possible.
- Counselling and training on health literacy in community settings and elsewhere such as in workplaces.
- Promote actions that support digital health literacy.
- Establish HL specific strategies and frameworks.
- Identify needs and measure progress and outcomes of HL interventions.
- Explore possibilities to establish health literate health organisations.
- Targeted campaigns and websites that are easy to access and navigate.

Improving health literacy for people-centred care

- Acknowledge and research.
- Collaborate to innovate.
- Improve data infrastructure.

Invest in robust research around the economic costs of poor HL and cost-effectiveness of interventions implemented.

Stronger international collaboration to share best practices, and discuss the creation of multi-stakeholder HL approaches.

Develop more robust ways of measuring HL, Monitor HL more regularly to understand individuals’ needs and better target interventions.
Recommendations from OECD
Moreira, 2018

1- Countries could improve the role of health systems in promoting HL and place greater emphasis in multi-stakeholder action.
2- Develop more robust research on what are effective interventions.
3- Strengthen international development in sharing best practices and develop innovative solutions.
4- Improve data infrastructure by enhancing HL measurement surveys.
Suggestions

• “The need for health care reform, a cultural shift in health care provision, and improved interaction between patients and health professionals” (Wheishaar, et al., 2018, p.18)

• Effective HL strategies need clear roadmaps for implementation, resources to follow through, and targets to monitor progress. (Wheishaar, et al., 2018)

• Involve all society in this mission of creating salutogenic environments and enabling people to live better and solve their own problems in their own way.
Health literacy is everyone’s business

... civic literacy skills involves

advocating for policies and services for maintaining and promoting one’s own health, the health of family members and the health of the community

Source: Mitic & Rootman, 2012
Health literacy contribution for

The Sustainable Development Goals

GOAL 3
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all age
Obrigada
Thank You