

The Need for Health Literacy in The 21st Century

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Abstract

Health literacy is the ability of individuals to understand, evaluate and use health information effectively in their daily lives and should not be reduced to the simple ability to read or write about health-related topics. With appropriate health literacy, citizens will gain greater autonomy in their self-care, improve their quality of life and make better use of health services, thereby reducing health service overload, inequalities and costs. To increase health literacy, it is necessary to identify the specific health needs of today's society and to implement educational programmes that include content and pedagogical methods that address these needs. Addressing these needs requires a diagnostic analysis embedded in each culture and continuous re-evaluation of the scope and effectiveness of the programmes implemented from an interdisciplinary perspective. Currently, most community and school-based programmes are based on disease prevention and maintaining good sexual and environmental health. Since the pandemic, there has also been an increase in programmes to achieve and maintain good mental health, combined with the use of various applications to prevent anxiety and depression. However, there is still a large gap in the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of these programmes. In general, most of these programmes need to be adapted to the digital age and have a comprehensive and holistic design and purpose. In conclusion, we believe that health literacy is essential in the 21st century and that it must be based on the promotion of healthy habits and behaviours as well as an understanding of one's own health.

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