

Nutrition literacy promotion, effective approach for society health promotion

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objective: Various definitions of health literacy have developed gradually. This concept refers to individuals' capacity to acquire, process and perceive information and basic healthcare services. The above items are required to make decisions on healthcare. In fact, improving both the individuals' access to health information and their capacity to use such information effectively are considered as efficient tools for community empowerment. In the domain of healthcare promotion, health literacy goes beyond the ability to read medical orders and use healthcare services. In the healthcare promotion approach, the emphasis is not put on disease experience or the appropriate use of medical services. Besides, the emphasis is put on the improvement of individuals' life conditions, and providing and promoting required resources for a better life. From the viewpoint of healthcare promotion, healthcare literacy is relegated to the individuals' ability to make better decisions in the realm of health care. Health literacy approach must try to promote individuals' required knowledge and skills in the domain of healthcare determiners and the way to maintain and modify them. Looking at health education from an applied viewpoint, the final result of health education and communication is to increase the level of healthcare literacy. Reviewing various approaches, levels and types of healthcare literacy will pave the way to conduct researches in this domain.

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Introduction

Health literacy refers to the capacity of individuals to acquire, process and perceive information and basic health services that are needed for health decisions. Health literacy is an important tool for community empowerment (1). Nutritional literacy can be defined by the capacity of individuals to obtain, process, and perceive basic nutritional information. Nutrition literacy is beyond basic reading and writing skills, and comprises of the skills that people need to gain in order to perceive and often interpret complex information about foods and nutrients. Today, these skills must necessarily include information and literacy processing because nutritional information is nowadays widely and increasingly available from various sources, such as the internet. Therefore, people need to have nutritional literacy in order to make conscious decisions about what type of food and to what extent they are required to maintain a proper nutritional status (2).

Nutritional literacy levels

- 1) Practical nutritional literacy: Essential necessary skills in writing and reading that are imperative for perceiving and following up simple nutrition messages.
- 2) Interactive nutritional literacy: social skills and advanced cognitive literacy increase individual's ability to participate effectively in health care program.
- 3) Critical nutritional literacy: the ability to critically evaluate and use information to engage in activities that can overcome health-related structural barriers. These two concepts explain health literacy communication and its relationship with the self-efficiency and community empowerment (2).

Nutritional literacy types

Nutritional literacy is divided into four sections that are correlated with each other.

- 1) **Basic literacy:** refers to the individual's ability to read, write, speak, and work with numbers.
- 2) **Scientific literacy:** academic literacy is the ability to understand the process and scientific basis concepts of a subject as well as the skill and ability to perceive and use a scientific category, and this is an important dimension in nutritional literacy as a science that involves a lot of biochemical processes.
- 3) **Civic Literacy:** Civil literacy refers to the abilities and skills that empower individuals not only to become aware of health issues but also to participate in critical discussions, and ultimately, the individual becomes part of the decision-making process in society. Individuals with a civic literacy can understand the need and importance of developing and implementing nutritional strategies, rules and policies related to it, and they can analyze nutritional information critically, increase their awareness, and participate in decision-making processes.
- 4) **Cultural Literacy:** it refers to the individual's ability to recognize the beliefs, customs and traditions in each community. Cultural literacy can contribute to the development and communication of nutritional information in line with the people's beliefs, customs and traditions, and enable people to perceive nutritional messages and the application of cultural methods that affect individuals' health status (3).

Difference in nutritional knowledge and nutritional literacy

The challenge in this area is the difference between nutritional literacy and nutritional

awareness. At the seventh Health Promotion Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, the need to raise public health literacy as a determinant of health has been highlighted and four major strategies have been identified for improving health literacy including increasing:

1) access to health-related information, 2) the use of health-related information through community empowerment, 3) the information through inter-sectoral coordination, and 4) appropriate ways to measure and report existing health literacy programs.

Table 1: Differences in health education (knowledge, attitude, behavior) and health literacy

Model-Based Health Education (Knowledge, Attitude, Behavior)	Health literacy
Problem based	System based
Individual approach and emphasis on individual interests	Systemic Approach and Emphasis on Social Benefits
Ignoring social and ecological dimensions	Including ecological, social and psychological factors
Training and work for the people	Training and work with the people
Social determinants affecting health are not included in model interventions (knowledge, attitude, behavior)	The importance of social factors affecting health (Example: Emphasis on Access Factor)
Including only three areas of knowledge, attitude and behavior	In addition to information transfer, the factors of social participation, empowerment and inter-agency coordination are important
data transfer	Develop practical skills and emphasize individual and social skills
Educational style is generally a lecture method and lack of feedback mechanism	The educational style is interactive, collaborative and critical analysis, and is similar to the educational style of critical awareness of Paolo Ferreira.
The problem is presented in a complex and detailed way, but the presented solutions are very general	Depending on the understanding and depth of the problem, a special solution is presented
Although it involves an attitude, it focuses on the awareness factor	The emphasis is on empowerment and controlling ability of people on their health
The concept of consciousness is an absolute concept, and there is no distinction between level of consciousness	Differential diagnosis is defined based on the people level of literacy based on the health literacy (Lack of literacy applied health literacy)

Conclusion

In recent years, nutritional awareness has increased; but there are still many gaps remain. The health promotion approach does not focus on disease experiences or the optimal use of medical services, but it is emphasis on improving people's living conditions and seeking to provide and improve the essential information to better life and to promote individual's ability to make better health de-

isions. Increasing the use of health-related information through empowerment is one of the key strategies. Health literacy is one way to empower people to control factors that affect their health and life. One of the strategies for empowerment is skills development. The skills that are needed to link the awareness and practice regarding healthy nutrition should be active and experienced-based. By increasing knowledge and skills relevant to healthy nu-

trition, people are not only able to promote and develop the desired behaviors associated with their own lives, but it can also have positive effects on the environment in which they live and improve their attitudes and ultimately improve their future prospects.

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