

HEALTH LITERACY IS A POLITICAL CHOICE

Health Literacy is a Political Choice - Guide for Policy-makers

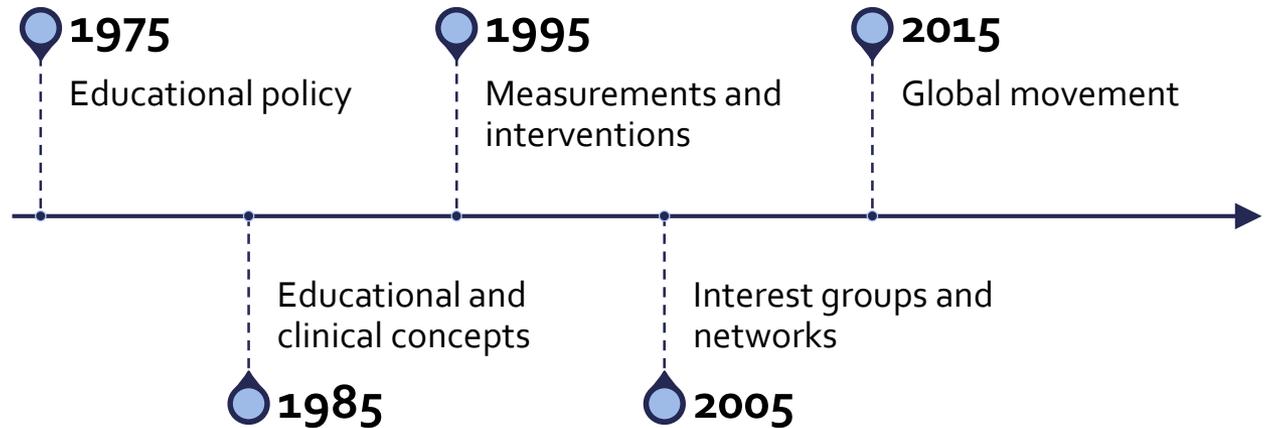
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GLOBAL HEALTH LITERACY ACADEMY

From clinical challenge to global movement



More than 60
networks
and interest
groups
around the
world



Sørensen et al. (2018) Health literacy and social change: exploring networks and interests groups shaping the rising global health literacy movement. *Global Health Promotion*. Accepted.

Shifting paradigms to people-centredness and co-production of health

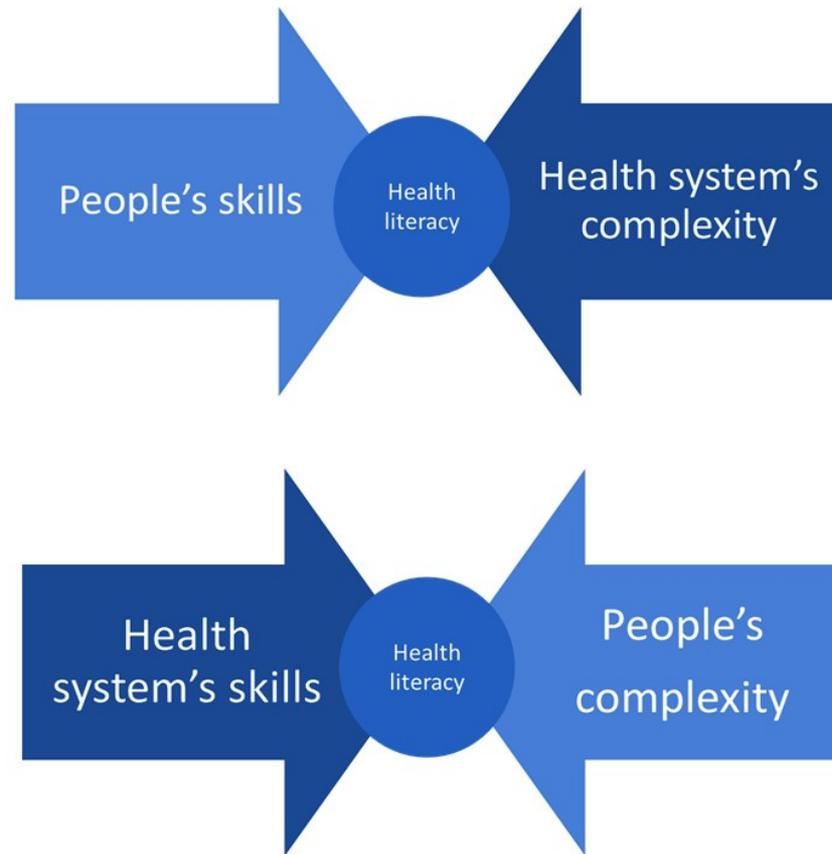
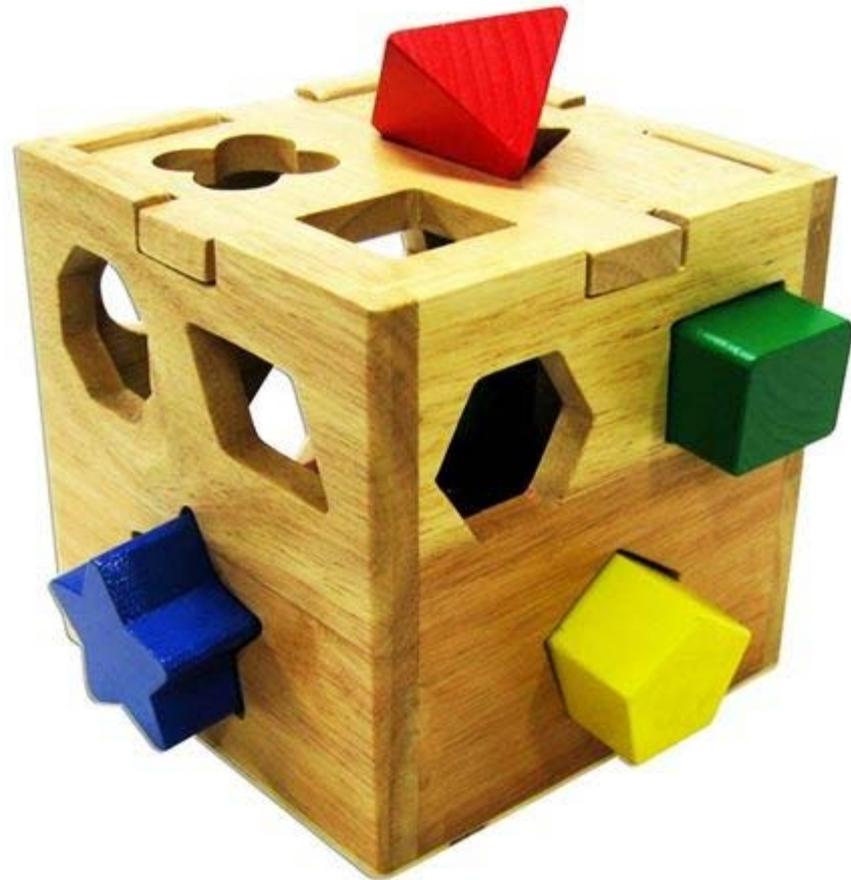


Figure 1: Shifting the health literacy mind-set to enhance people-centred health services

Sørensen, 2018: Shifting the Health Literacy Mindset to Enhance People-Centred Health Services
<https://health.gov/news/blog/2018/07/shifting-the-health-literacy-mindset-to-enhance-people-centred-health-services/>

No one size
fits all

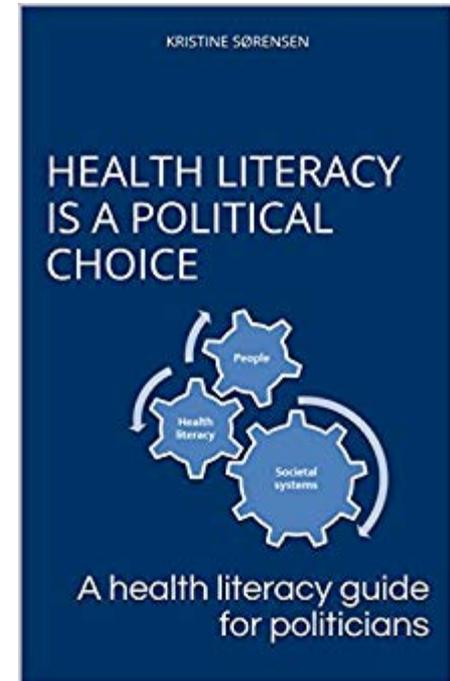


Policy advice

If we want health equity, we need to make health literacy a priority

– Sylvia Mathews Burwell

Served as the 22nd United States Secretary of Health and Human Services under Obama



The policy case for health literacy

It is evident

It is measurable

It is feasible

It is for the public good



HEALTH LITERACY GUIDE FOR POLITICIANS

1

Health literacy defined

Health literacy is closely linked to literacy and entails the knowledge, motivation and competency to access, understand, appraise and apply information to form judgement and make decision concerning healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain and promote quality of life during the life course.

2

Health literacy is evident

Health literacy is important when managing health and for interacting with healthcare services and social systems. In turn, services and organizations need to be designed in a health literacy friendly way to enhance collective efforts and better health outcomes for the individual and society as a whole.

3

Health literacy is measurable

Health literacy can be measured at individual and population level. Screening tools applied in clinical settings revealed worse outcomes for patients with poor health literacy levels than for patients with higher levels of health literacy. Population studies indicate that almost one in two lack health literacy. Monitoring supports the implementation of health literacy into daily practice.

4

Health literacy is feasible

Overcoming barriers of health literacy is feasible and can be linked to quality standards for care, health system performance measures, organizational audits, behavioural change programmes and self-management programmes. Activities can include eHealth, the use of plain language, cultural awareness, personalised treatment, availability of choice, and navigation support.

5

Health literacy is for the public good

Health literacy is closely linked to empowerment and the investment in health literacy is imperative to bridge inequality. Improving health literacy in populations provides the foundation on which citizens are enabled to play an active role in improving their own health and engage successfully in community action for health. Health literacy – saves lives, saves time, saves money.



Economic drain



Time to deliver

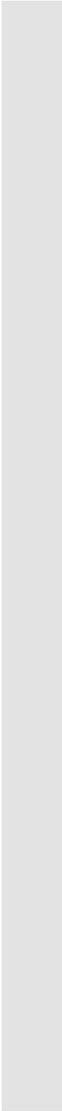
For dignity

For equity

For people, not only systems

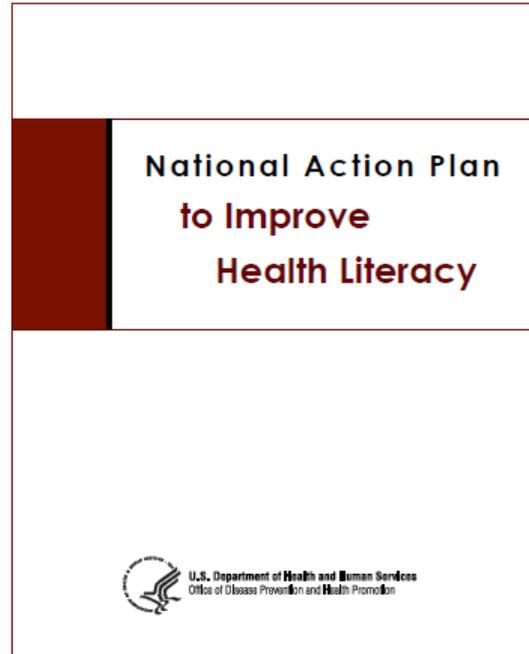
For supporting health and wellbeing for all





Policy examples

The National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy (US)



"We should address in a sustained manner the problem of health literacy in our Nation with a goal of improving health status within and across populations".

National action plans

Making it easy (Scotland)

- **Highlights the hidden problem** of low health literacy and the impact that this has on our ability to access, understand, engage and participate in our health and social care.
- Explains that **low health literacy leads to poor health outcomes** and widens health inequality.
- **Calls for all of us** involved in health and social care to systematically address health literacy as a priority in our efforts to improve health and reduce health inequalities.
- **Sets out an ambition** for all of us in Scotland to have the confidence, knowledge, understanding and skills we need to live well, with any health condition we have.
- **Lays out the actions** the Scottish Government and partners are taking to help all of us in health and social care collaborate and help realise this ambition.



Essential political buy-in

Global mandate

National and local policies, strategies, guidelines

Healthy cities

Health literate organizations

High ambitions - necessary to create the change

Economic argument





Global
Health Literacy
Academy

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