

Functional, Communicative and Critical Health Literacy of Chronic Disease Patients and their importance for Self-Management

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Background



- **Research on Health Literacy (HL) in Europe is scarce**
- **It is estimated that 29% of the Dutch population has limited HL skills, but the exact problems patients encounter are less clear**
- **There is little knowledge about the impact of limited HL skills on the ability for self-management of chronic disease patients**



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Aim



- **To get more specific insight into the level of HL among chronic disease patients in the Netherlands**
- **To identify vulnerable groups**
- **To examine the relationship between HL and self-management**



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Method



- **1.341 patients with a medical diagnosis of a chronic disease from the research program NPCD**
- **Cross-sectional**
- **Questionnaire, april 2013**
 - Dutch Functional, Communicative and Critical Health Literacy scale (FCCHL)
 - Partners in Health scale (PIH)
 - Perceived Efficacy in Patient-Doctor Interactions (PEPPI-5)
 - Background characteristics (sex, age, educational level, living situation, income, multimorbidity, functional limitations)



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Functional Health Literacy



When reading instructions or leaflets from hospitals/pharmacies, how often do you find...	Percentage of patients that says "regularly" or "often"
that the print is too small to read , even when you are wearing glasses?	23
words or characters that you do not know?	24
the content too difficult?	20
that you need a long time to understand them?	17
that you need someone to help you to understand them?	8



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Communicative Health Literacy



When searching for health information, how difficult it is for you to	Percentage of patients that thinks this is "rather difficult" or "difficult"
collect information from different sources? (like the internet, books, other people)	17
find exactly the information you want?	24
understand the obtained information?	14
communicate your thoughts about your illness or complaints to others? (like family, friends or professionals)	21
apply the obtained information to your daily life?	19



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Critical Health Literacy



When searching for health information, how difficult it is for you to	Percentage of patients that thinks this is "rather difficult" or "difficult"
consider whether the information is applicable to your situation?	31
consider the validity and reliability of the information?	48
check whether the information is valid and reliable?	47
collect information to make health-related decisions?	42



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Vulnerable groups

Characteristics	Health Literacy skills		
	Functional	Communicative	Critical
Gender	0	0	0
Educational level	++	++	++
Age	--	--	--
Living alone	0	-	0
Income	++	++	++
Type of chronic disease	0	0	0
Number of chronic diseases	--	--	--
Presence of functional limitations	--	--	--

++, -- = P<.001; +, - = P<.01; 0 = not significant



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Health Literacy and Self-Management

Self-management abilities	Health Literacy Skills		
	Functional	Communicative	Critical
Knowledge	++	++	++
Feels able to recognize and monitor symptoms	0	++	+
Feels able to take an active role in treatment	+	++	++
Feels able to cope with the consequences of having a chronic disease	+	+	++
Feels self-confident in the interaction with professionals	+	++	++

++, -- = P<.001; +, - = P<.01; 0 = not significant



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Conclusions

- About 20% of the chronic disease patients experience difficulties with respect to functional or communicative HL. Almost half of the patients report problems with respect to critical HL.
- A higher age, lower education level, lower income, multi-morbidity and/or more severe functional limitations are associated with lower levels of HL.
- Better HL skills relate to better self-management
- Functional, communicative and critical HL each impact in a unique way on self-management.



Practice implications

- Professionals should reliably estimate different types of HL skills, not only reading or writing skills
- Information and self-management support should be tailored to these different skills and the personal context of patients



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Do you want to hear more about our research?
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