Health Literacy

"Literacy and health literacy are fundamental components of pursuing health and wellbeing in modern society."
Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe

This document has been curated by Fellows of the RACP to help you find high quality CPD resources on health literacy.

Resources are categorised by type:

1. Key organisations & websites
2. Webcasts
3. Courses
4. Tools
5. Key journals
6. Recommended reading

Professional Development in Health Literacy

Numerous definitions of health literacy have evolved since the term was coined in the 1970s. Increasingly, these go beyond the individual and highlight the social and technological factors that impact health literacy.

At its core, health literacy refers to:

- The ability to understand and interpret health information
- The ability to apply knowledge and skills to manage your health
- The ability to navigate health systems and services

Accurately judging a patient’s health literacy level is challenging, yet it is fundamental to tailoring management to the individual.

Understanding health literacy and its role also helps with communication on a broader level. It is a key component of designing services that all patients can engage with and providing health information to a whole community.

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK:
RACP curated collections are managed by the Learning Support Unit, based on the contributions and peer review of Fellows of the College and other experts.

We thank Prof Rachelle Buchbinder and the health literacy teams at Monash University and Deakin University for their contributions to this page.

Tell us what you think about this page and make suggestions for improvement by emailing myresources@racp.edu.au.

Short on time? Try this:

- Read a systematic review of models and definitions of health literacy
- Watch a video about quality care for people with limited health literacy
- Test your organisation’s health literacy
1 Key organisations & websites
Useful as a starting point and overview of current work in this area

**CPD TIP:** Keep notes on your activities on these sites to claim CPD points in **Category 6 (1 credit/hr)**

**Health Literacy New Zealand**
This website from Workbase aims to support health professionals, managers and policy makers by providing comprehensive free information about health literacy, resources and expertise.

**Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Health Literacy**
The roundtable website includes workshop summaries, annual reports and papers from the Health Literacy Roundtable. This activity brings together academia, industry, government, associations and consumer interests to improve health literacy.

**Centres for Disease Control and Prevention: Health Literacy**
This website from the CDC includes information on health literacy as well as links to useful tools and training.

2 Webcasts
Useful for brief overviews of topics and recent developments

**CPD TIP:** Keep notes on the activities you watch to claim CPD points in **Category 6 (1 credit/hr)**

**Assuring Quality Care for People With Limited Health Literacy**
This Medscape video, along with presentation slides, covers the relationship between health literacy and patient safety, communication skills and other clinical strategies to care for those with limited health literacy.

**Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health: Health Literacy Forum**
This event on ‘curing the cultural barrier’ focused not on individual’s health literacy, but the system’s capacity to ensure a person understands what’s happening to them. Audio recordings are available for free.

**Health Literacy for Healthcare Professionals**
This short video from students at the University of Manitoba is a basic introduction to health literacy and its role in patient care.

3 Courses
Useful for in depth, structured learning

**CPD TIP:** Keep certificates and notes from courses to claim CPD points in **Category 4 (3 credits/hr)**

**CDC: Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals**
This short online learning course from the American Centres for Disease Control introduces public health professionals to the fundamentals of health literacy and demonstrates its importance in their practice.

**Deakin University: Health Literacy Masterclass**
This is a two day intensive masterclass for health professionals, managers and executives, health planners and those active in health promotion and community services.

**Health Literacy and Communication for Health Professionals**
This online source from the University of Nebraska Medical Center aims to give health professionals the tools needed to improve upon their health literacy and communication skills.
Tools

Useful for implementing what you have learned in your daily practice

CPD TIP: Keep documentation from audits to claim CPD points in Category 5 (3 credits/hr)

Enliven Organisational Health Literacy Self-assessment Resource

This evidence-based self-assessment tool will help guide the development of health literate organisations. Processes, outputs and outcomes have been developed for each of the 10 attributes of a health literate organisation, as identified by the Institute of Medicine (IOM).

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

This toolkit approaches health literacy from an American perspective. It provides step-by-step guidance and tools for assessing your practice and making changes so you connect with patients of all literacy levels.

Key journals

Useful for keeping up to date with research and finding out more on specific topics

CPD TIP: Keep notes on what you read to claim CPD points in Category 6 (1 credit/hr)

Health Promotion International

Health Promotion International is the official journal of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) and is published in association with the WHO.

Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives

This journal focuses on the communication of health information globally. Topics include health literacy, old and new media, shared decision making, public health, policy and ethics.

Patient Education and Counselling

PEC is the official journal of the European Association for Communication in Healthcare and the American Academy on Communication in Healthcare. It has an interdisciplinary and international focus.

Recommended reading

Useful for keeping up to date with research and finding out more on specific topics

CPD TIP: Keep notes on what you read to claim CPD points in Category 6 (1 credit/hr)

Australian Bureau of Statistics: Health Literacy

A short report from the ABS on the health literacy of Australian adults. The data is from 2006 but this remains a useful guide to health literacy amongst various groups.

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care: Health Literacy, Taking action to improve safety and quality

This guide explains the concept and importance of health literacy in the Australian context and offers strategies for addressing health literacy at an individual and organisational level.
This paper describes the research and development of a project in Victoria that aims to identify and respond to health literacy issues for people with chronic conditions. The project piloted interventions to inform a health literacy response framework to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.

**eHealth Literacy: Essential Skills for Consumer Health in a Networked World**
This paper discusses health literacy in the online and technological context.

**Health literacy and Australian Indigenous peoples: an analysis of the role of language and worldview**
This paper explores the impact of Indigenous-specific factors on health literacy, which are important to understand in a clinical and public health context.

The objective of this study was to conceptualise health literacy from the patient perspective. It identifies key abilities identified by patients as critical to seek, understand and utilise information in the healthcare setting.

**Ophelia Project**
Deakin University and Monash University have collaborated on the Ophelia project. The Deakin website also links to a number of useful articles including one that appraises various tools for measuring health literacy.

**Medibank: Health Literacy Implications for Australia**
This short guide focuses on health literacy in the Australian context, providing explanations and recommendations.

This paper works towards finding a consensus about the definition of health literacy and its conceptual dimensions.

**Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial**
This paper investigates the effect of three questions (what are my options? what are the benefits and harms? and how likely are these?), on information provided by physicians about treatment options. It demonstrates the connections between patient centred care and health literacy.