

The disruptive power of health literacy: ensuring timely, reliable and relevant health information to the public

Kristine SØRENSEN. Global Health Literacy Academy.
(contact@globalhealthliteracyacademy.org)

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for people-centred care and co-production of health which in turn requires people and health professionals to engage and ensure clear communication and participative decision-making. However, European health literacy research shows that a large proportion (1/3-2/3) of people have difficulties in managing information to make decisions. Health literacy is linked to literacy and entails people's knowledge, motivation and competency to access, understand, appraise and apply information to form judgement and make decisions in terms of healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion in everyday life to maintain and promote quality of life during the life course. In a world of information overload and fake news it remains a challenge to navigate information and apply it to improve health in everyday life. This presentation focuses on the disruptive power of health literacy regarding access to timely, reliable and relevant health information to patients and the public. Health literacy is a new essential professional skill for many disciplines. To develop an inclusive and sustainable health literate society we need to focus on the skills and opportunities that we provide for people and staff to get involved in the decision-making processes at individual as well as organizational levels. Health Literacy goes beyond a narrow concept of health education and individual behaviour-oriented communication. It also addresses the environmental, political and social factors determining health. The investment in health literacy is a game changer because we through empowerment make people and professionals able to voice concerns, use local wisdom and apply new avenues of thinking. The aim is essentially to create a culture of inclusion that allows for dignity and resourceful decision-making where no one is left behind. Ensuring timely, reliable and relevant health information for all is therefore the key to make it a success.

Nota biográfica

Kristine SØRENSEN. As a thought leader Kristine Sørensen is committed to advance the global scope and scale of health literacy. Her educational background is in medicine, public health and global health diplomacy. Amongst others, she has advised EU, WHO, ECDC, the European Parliament and Council of Europe on how to create health literate societies. She has received the EUROPEAN HEALTH AWARD 2012 for the societal impact of her work on health literacy in Europe and in 2017 she received the International Health Literacy Award for starting up the International Health Literacy Association of which she is the first president. Kristine Sørensen is also the focal point for HEALTH LITERACY EUROPE – a network for advancing European health literacy and the founder of the Global Health Literacy Academy.