



## HEALTH LITERACY AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM FOR ROMA IN ROMA SETTLEMENTS

for local Roma educators and mediators

- **Module 1: HEALTH LITERACY**
  - **Chapter 1: WHAT IS HEALTH LITERACY?**

### SUMMARY:

Exploring the concept and definitions of health literacy.

Various aspects of health literacy.



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# OVERVIEW of Module I: Health Literacy



- **Chapter 1: What is health literacy?**  
Exploring the concept and definitions of health literacy. Various aspects of health literacy.
- **Chapter 2: The concepts and consequences of limited health literacy How big is the Roma health literacy problem in Europe?**  
Roma Health Literacy is considered a European problem and challenge affecting a large proportion of the continent's population. This Chapter, explores the extent of the health literacy problem in European Roma communities.
- **Chapter 3: Barriers in communication between healthcare professional and Roma patients.**  
Roma patients with limited health literacy often experience barriers in the communication with healthcare professionals and health mediators, experiencing for example – language barrier, mistrust, racial discrimination or simply the use of medical jargon. The Chapter also addresses the challenges concerning the delivery of health information Roma communities in a variety of non-clinical settings, both in-person and via information technology.
- **Chapter 4: Accessing, understanding and appraising health information**  
For patients to self-manage their health and disease, it is important that they are able to access, understand, and appraise health information. However, many Roma people experience difficulties doing so and this Chapter is focusing on tools to overcome those difficulties.



## HEALTH LITERACY AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM FOR ROMA IN ROMA SETTLEMENTS

### MODULE 1 Chapter 1: What is Health Literacy?



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## Why Health Literacy? Educational Video



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- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3e5IXMcedDc&ab\\_channel=BlueCrossBlueShieldofMichigan](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3e5IXMcedDc&ab_channel=BlueCrossBlueShieldofMichigan)

## What is health literacy about?



- Health literacy is the most important factor in getting the proper health information and health services.
- Health literacy significantly affects healthcare accessibility, availability, affordability and eventually cost.
- Health literacy makes it possible for the people to actively participate in the healthcare decision making process.

Health literacy has become a priority for health in the 21st century.

It is vital for people's ability to manage health and to navigate the health system.

Health literacy is also a foundation for health organisations' capacity to serve patients and clients, and for society to ensure the health and wellbeing of its citizens.

An individual's health literacy skills are crucial for health-related decisions.

It is essential that patients and their families are able to obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions to manage their health.

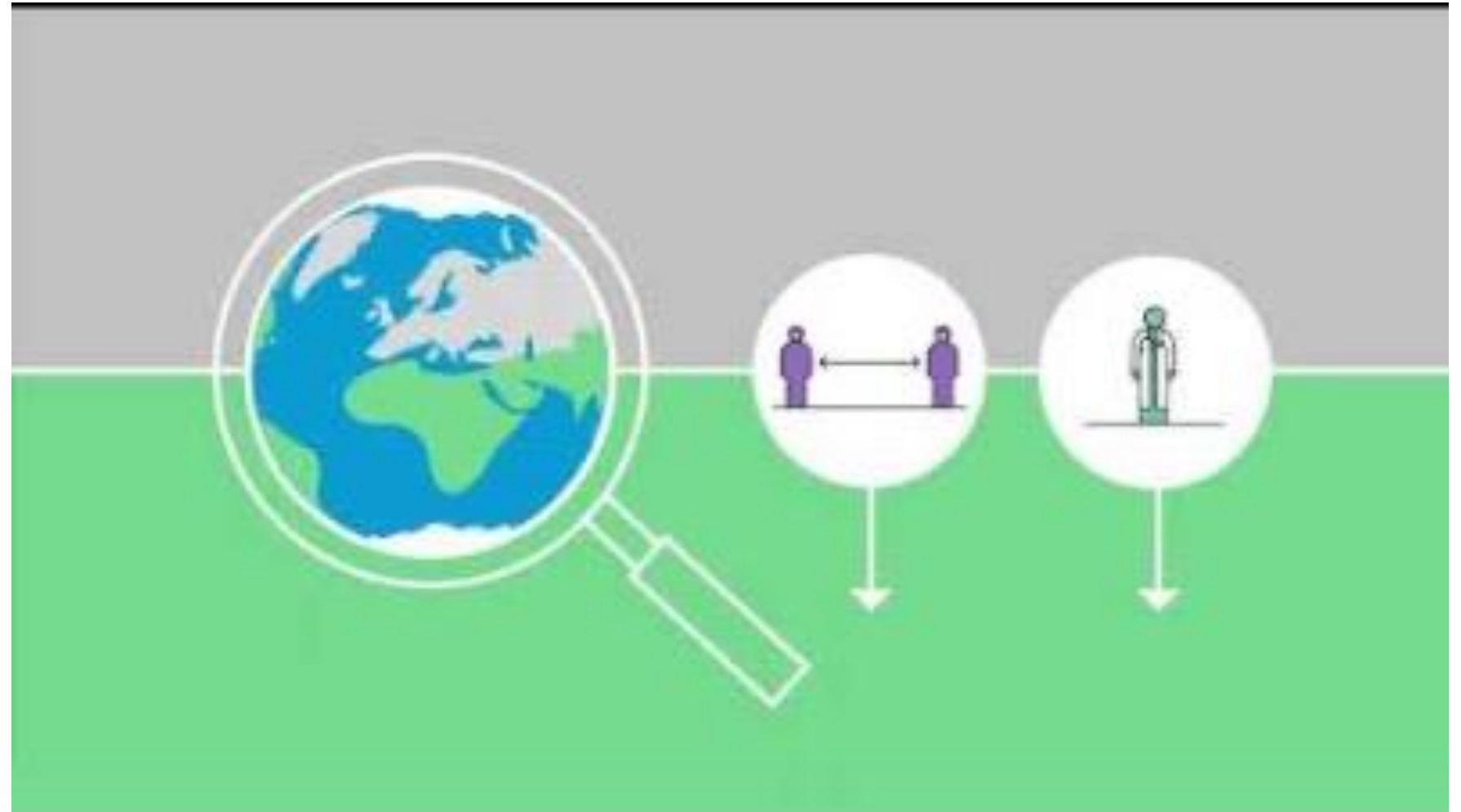
# Developing Health Literacy



- Health literacy develops during the human life course through formal capacity building and education as well as informal learning.
- It is influenced by personal, situational and societal determinants and has, in turn, an impact on healthcare use and costs, health behaviour and status, participation and empowerment as well as sustainability and equity



# Knowledge, skills and health literacy: Educational Video of World Health Organization



- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB48rMdPruY&ab\\_channel=WHORegionalOfficeforEurope](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB48rMdPruY&ab_channel=WHORegionalOfficeforEurope)





# Health Literacy Definitions (I)



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- Building on numerous overlapping definitions, there is a growing acceptance of several core aspects of how to define health literacy.
- Research has shown that the concept of health literacy has been used in different ways in different contexts.
- As an emerging term, “health literacy” has gained interest from a wide range of stakeholders. It was first cited in 1974 by Simonds with regards to health education in schools.
- The first scientific article appeared in the 1980s, the second at the beginning of the 1990s and in 2006 more than 100 articles were issued. A decade later, more than 1,000 scientific publications International handbook of health literacy 6 yearly addressed health literacy, according to PubMed, and this exponential growth has resulted in more than 7,000 records to 2018.



## Health Literacy Definitions (II)



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- In the last two decades the conceptual approach has moved beyond an individual approach to an approach considering health literacy embedded in a societal context, influencing the relationship and interaction between individuals and the societal services to maintain and improve health.
- In 1998, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health literacy as ‘the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health’.
- In 1999, the American Medical Association Ad Hoc Committee on Health Literacy has defined health literacy as “a constellation of skills, including the ability to perform basic reading and numerical tasks required to function in the healthcare environment”.



## Health Literacy Definitions (III)



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- In 2007 the European Commission defines health literacy as ‘The ability to read, filter and understand health information to form sound judgments.’
- In 2010 Wu et al described ‘Health literate individuals are able to understand and apply health information in ways that allow them to take more control over their health through, for example, appraising the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of information and action on that information to change their health behaviours or living conditions.’
- In 2015 Dodson et al defined it as ‘The personal characteristics and social resources needed for individuals and communities to access, understand, appraise and use information and services to make decisions about health. Health literacy includes the capacity to communicate, assert and enact these decisions.’



# Health Literacy as a Multidimensional Concept

Each definition highlights specific aspects of health literacy that help to expand the understanding of it.

Health literacy is a skill-based process that individuals can use to identify and transform information into knowledge and action.

Indeed, recent discussions have highlighted the importance of moving beyond an individual focus, and of considering health literacy as an interaction between the demands of health systems and the skills of individuals.

# Types of Health Literacy (I)

In 2008 Nutbeam distinguishes between:

- functional health literacy,
- interactive health literacy and
- critical health literacy.

**Functional health literacy** refers to the basic skills in reading and writing that are necessary to function effectively in everyday situations, broadly comparable with the content of ‘medical’ health literacy referred to above.

## Types of Health Literacy (II)

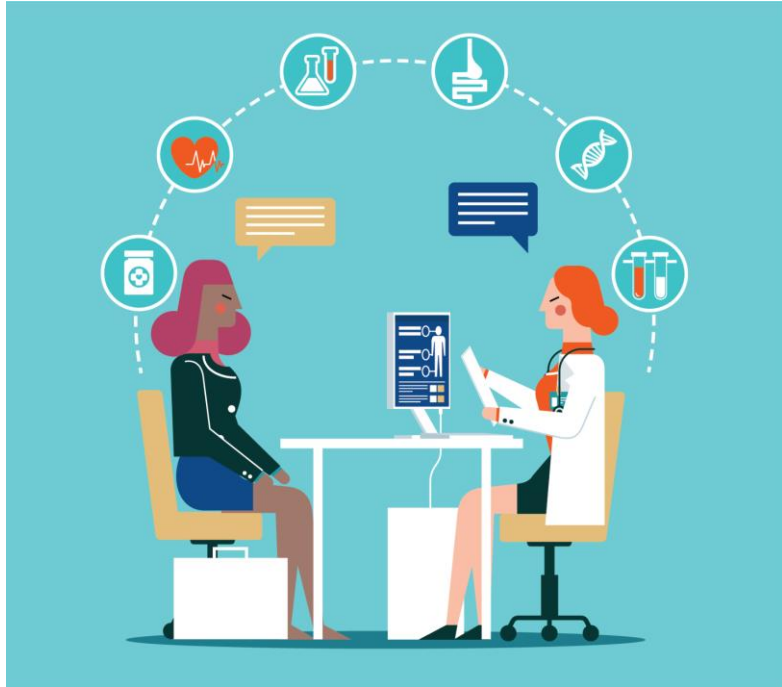


**Interactive health literacy** refers to more advanced cognitive and literacy skills, which, together with social skills, can be used to actively participate in everyday situations, extract information and derive meaning from different forms of communication, and apply this to changing circumstances.

**Critical health literacy** refers to more advanced cognitive skills, which, together with social skills, can be applied to critically analyse information and use this to exert greater control over life events.



# Factors that Contribute to an Individual's Health Literacy



- There are many factors that contribute to an individual's health literacy, the most obvious being the individual's general literacy, or ability to read, write, and understand written material.
- Other factors include the individual's amount of experience in the healthcare system, the complexity of the information being presented, cultural factors that may influence decision making, and how the health material is communicated.



## General Literacy as an Aspect of Health Literacy (I)



- Of the above-mentioned factors, perhaps the most important patient factor is the individual's general literacy.
- Most individuals with limited general literacy also have limited health literacy.
- A limited ability to read and understand information translates into poor health outcomes. Most clinicians are surprised to learn that literacy is the single best predictor of health status. In fact, all of the studies that have investigated the issue report that literacy skills are a stronger predictor of an individual's health status than age, income, employment status, education level, and racial or ethnic group.



## General Literacy as an Aspect of Health Literacy (part II)



- European research points out that patients with limited literacy skills have less awareness of preventive health measures and less knowledge of their medical conditions and self-care instructions than their more literate counterparts.
- This knowledge deficit has been shown for a variety of health conditions, ranging from childhood fever to asthma to hypertension. Persons with limited literacy skills also exhibit less healthy behaviours.



## Health Literacy in Other Groups



- However, it is important to emphasize that limited understanding of health concepts and health information is not solely a problem of persons with low literacy skills. For example, even patients with average reading levels are unable to understand most of the content of consent forms used for research studies of cancer drugs.
- Highly literate, well-educated individuals also report difficulty understanding information provided to them by clinicians because clinicians often use vocabulary and discuss physiological concepts unfamiliar to those who do not have a medical education. In a well-known anecdote, a prominent obstetrician once reported that he was unable to fully understand the explanation he received from an orthopaedist about his upcoming orthopaedic surgery.



## Health Literacy as a general population challenge



- Even persons with adequate literacy skills may have trouble understanding and applying healthcare information, especially when it is explained in technical, unfamiliar terms. They may be verbally articulate and appear well educated and knowledgeable yet fail to grasp disease concepts or understand how to carry out medication regimens properly.
- The important message is that you can't tell by looking whether someone has sufficient skills to adequately understand health concepts and carry out healthcare instructions.
- Because you can't tell just by looking, clinicians and medical practices should best deliver effective medical care by providing easy-to-understand information to all patients. .



## 5 things to know about Health Literacy: Educational Video



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- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG-iY-em7mk&ab\\_channel=U.S.DepartmentofHealthandHumanServices](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG-iY-em7mk&ab_channel=U.S.DepartmentofHealthandHumanServices)



## HEALTH LITERACY AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM FOR ROMA IN ROMA SETTLEMENTS

### Module 1: HEALTH LITERACY CHAPTER 1: What is Health Literacy

# CONCLUSIONS

- Poor health literacy is a common problem with important implications for health status.
- Limited health literacy highly associated with poor health status, and literacy skills more accurately predict health status than education level, income, ethnic background, or any other sociodemographic variable.
- Individuals with limited health literacy have higher rates of illness and more hospitalizations than individuals with more well-developed health literacy and skills.



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