

# Health Literacy in Primary Care

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## Background

Health Literacy (HL) describes the knowledge and skills that enable individuals to deal with their own health and disease. This means that HL is of great importance in Primary Care (PC).

In 2012 the HLS-EU study surveyed the HL of eight EU countries. This survey shows that HL in Austria is problematic or even inadequate in 56.4% of the population and generally worse than the average of the other participating countries.

## Research Question

How can the HL of PC patients be improved?

## Methodology

A structured review in the database PubMed and a selective literature research with internet and libraries for the period 2000 to 2017 were conducted. Defined search terms, inclusion and exclusion and evaluation criteria were used.

## Results

39 publications have been identified. Of these, 18% (n = 7/39) refer to the definition of HL, 15% (n = 6/39) to the definition of PC, 23% (n = 9/39) to the determinants of HL, 21% (n = 8/39) to the impact of HL and 23% (n = 9/39) to possible approaches for improving HL.

The possible effects of a low HL on patients discussed in literature are: reduced use of preventive and health-promoting services, lower patient satisfaction, poorer perceived quality of life and in patients with chronic diseases, less knowledge of illness and less treatment success due to non-compliance with the treatment instructions.

The following determinants of HL have to be considered by PC: education level of the individual, education level of the parents, sex, income, age, background of migration.

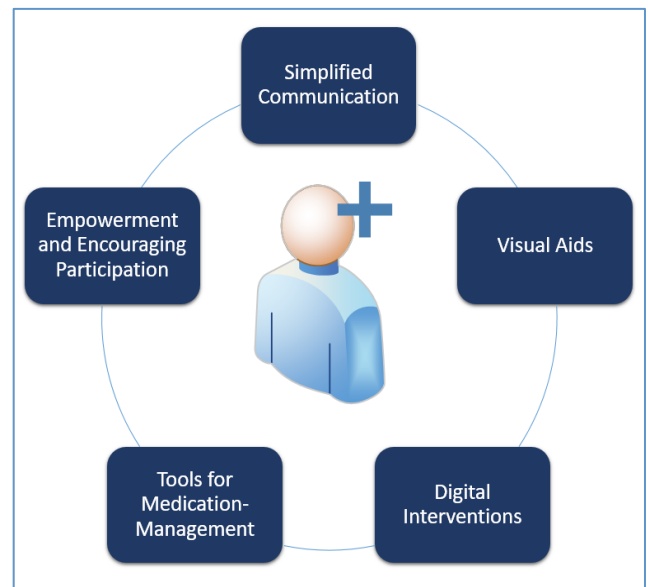
Recommend interventions to promote HL within PC are

- simplified verbal and written communication
- visual aids
- tools for medication-management in simple language,
- supporting digital interventions
- encouraging participation
- repeating what was said and avoidance of medical terms.

## Conclusion

HL must be integrated into all processes of health care organizations in order to improve health equity.

## Five key areas for improvement of Health Literacy in Primary Care



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