

Forging Health Literacy Partnerships for Quality Health Care

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Gold Coast Health
Building a healthier community

 **Queensland
Government**

Presentation Overview

- Review Health Literacy
- Discuss Political and Policy Context
- Examine Partnerships
- The GC Hospital Consumer Partnership
- Early Achievements and the Pitfalls Ahead

Health Literacy: The Silent Epidemic

60% of Australian adults and 83% of older adults have poor health literacy (ABS Study, 2006)

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Higher rates of hospitalisation and emergency care.
- Higher rates of adverse outcomes generally.
- Lower uptake of preventive approaches.
- Estimated to be associated with extra costs of 3–5% to the health system.

Reference: National Statement on Health Literacy, (2014) ***Australian Commission on Health Literacy and Safety***

Low Level of Health Literacy

Affects people's ability to:

- Navigate the healthcare system including filling out complex forms and locating providers and services
- Share personal information, such as health history, with providers
- Engage in self-care and chronic-disease management and medication instructions
- Understand mathematical concepts such as probability and risk.

Health Literacy: A Contested Term

“How people understand information about health and health care and how they apply that information to their lives and use it to make decisions and act on it.”

<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/patient-and-consumer-centred-care/health-literacy/>

Critical Health Literacy

“Although the literacy and verbal skills of individuals are of critical importance, so too are the demands made by the health materials themselves, the communication skills of those in the health field, and the complicated nature of the healthcare and public health systems.”

Rima Rudd

Health Literacy Challenges

Narrow definitions of Health Literacy can lead inevitably to a pamphlet and brochure approach and patient blaming.

Health Literacy ideally should be part of the school curriculum, until then, to place all responsibility on the patient will fail to achieve desired outcomes.

System level changes need to be implemented within health care organizations.

More Than a Set of Brochures!

- ***Policies/ protocols:*** programs for staff and volunteers, information sessions and workshops for staff, skills building and training.
- ***Verbal exchange:*** staff providing support and giving advice, multilingual staff available, clear communication including the use of audiovisual support, translation services.
- ***Printed communication:*** posters, documents in clear writing style and size, photographs and illustrations.
- ***Navigation:*** availability and easy access to entrance, lobby, hallways easy to navigate, easy access to service and specialty areas, staff assistance available.
- ***A System Approach*** to building skills and training.

Current Context

- Australian Health Ministers endorsed Health Literacy and Health Literacy Research (**Political Context**)
- National Safety and Quality Standards revised (2nd edition)
 - Increased Health Literacy requirements
 - Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers, and other 7 standards, incorporate health literacy (**Policy Context**)
- Influencers and Stakeholders Support (**Organisational Context**)

Forging Partnerships for Health Literacy: Time to Act

Important Social
and Structural
Health Issue

Key Policy Area

Has Organisational
Significance

Health Literacy:
Accreditation
Standard

Partnerships with
Consumers:
Accreditation
Standard

Organisational
Support: Capacity,
Readiness and
Collaboration

Trust between the
Organization and
Consumers

Influencers and
Hospital
Champions

Initiating Consumer Partnership

Engage	Engage with the Organization - find Champion(s).
Advocate	Advocate for Health Literacy Action to Hospital Committees and the Hospital Board.
Support	Support on-going Health Literacy Discussions with Organisational Champions.

What Makes Successful Partnerships?

- A desire to work towards a common purpose
- Joint operating committees that meet on a regular basis
- Be willing to compromise
- Create clear roles
- Direct communication channels
- Promote a culture of shared values.

Harvard Business School: <https://hbr.org/2015/12/making-hospital-partnerships-work>

GCH Consumer Partnership

- Shared Health Literacy Narrative.
- Credible Vision of Possible Achievements.
- Shared Leadership.
- Pooling of Resources.
- Multi-level Strategies.
- New ways of working - Bottom-Up (Consumer) and Top-Down (Organisation).
- Advance Patient Empowerment through System Level Activities.

The Start of the Journey

Drivers for Organisational Change

- Motivated Consumer Advisory Group
 - CAG Health Literacy Working Group
 - GCH Health Literacy Research
- Board, Executive and Clinical Governance Support
- GCH Patient Centered Approach to Care

Goal: Sustainable Health Literacy Program

The Journey So Far

- Establishment of Joint Health Literacy Committee
- Development of a Health Literacy Strategy
- Planning Workshop
- Promotion of Health Literacy Committee, plans and progress to date
- Health Literacy Survey
- Consumer Stakeholder Project

Where to Next

Ensure health literacy program is implemented in a systematic and planned approach.

Why?

- Supports sustainability of the strategy and operational actions
- Ensures longevity of the program
- Health literacy becomes 'business as usual' for staff and consumers

Where to Next

How?

- Survey our consumers / patients health literacy knowledge to inform future improvement strategies
- Build into current GCH systems and processes
- Partner with the wider Gold Coast community
- Develop strategies to increase health literacy in the community

Community Outreach

- Work with consumer advocacy groups to identify health literacy programs for vulnerable populations
- Partner with community-based organizations to develop and deliver health literacy outreach programs.
- Develop partnerships with school librarians and teachers, to support and foster health related material.
- Promote health information classes at the public library.

Future Challenges

- Incorporating Health Literacy into Quality Improvement Teams
- Introducing New Strategies in a Time of Limited Resources
- Competing Priorities within the Health Service
- Cultural Barriers within the Organisation
- Engaging Community Stakeholders
- Sustainability of the Program

Take Home Messages

- Find a common cause together with your health organisation - establish shared leadership – promote new ways of working - focus on strategic targeting - seek evidence and current best practice.
- Promote policies that ensure the health system is responsive to all, with a clear focus on illness and disease prevention and health promotion
- Highlight the significance of Health Literacy (or your passion) as a key determinant of health and wellbeing.
- Health Literacy is at the very heart of patient centred care and patient empowerment.
- Without attention to Health Literacy, patient empowerment is unlikely and patient and clinician partnerships are an unrealistic dream.