

Library and Knowledge Services Newsletter

Issue no. 2

July / August 2019

Health Information Week (1st - 7th July) is a national multi-sector campaign to promote high quality information for patients and the public. You can follow the campaign on Twitter using **#HIW2019**.

Heal⁺h
Information
Week
1-7 July 2019

We are supporting Health Information Week with this Health Literacy edition of our newsletter.

In this edition:

- What is health literacy?
- Why is health literacy important?
- Supporting and improving health literacy

Welcome to the Library and Knowledge Services newsletter.
Our newsletter will keep you up to date with resource and service developments as well as news from our team members.

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What is health literacy?

“Health literacy refers to 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.”
World Health Organisation, 2015
<https://gateway.euro.who.int/en/themes/health-literacy/>

Why is health literacy important?



A [British Journal of General Practice article by Rowlands et al \(2015\)](#) found that 43% of people did not understand the text component of health information and 61% of people did not understand the text and numeracy components of health information.

The researchers concluded that health information in England is too complex for the skills of a significant proportion of the population. Those who are at the highest risk of poorer health (such as those from black and minority ethnic groups and those with low-income, low status jobs) are more likely to have low health literacy.

Supporting and improving health literacy



Health Education England's [Health Literacy "how to" guide](#) shares practical tools and techniques that you can use to support patients with low levels of health literacy.



The guide includes best practice information about verbal and written communication.

Top tips for creating written information

(From the Policy for the Development of Written Patient Information, ULHT, 2013)

- Use plain language and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Be respectful and sensitive by avoiding the use of humour (as this is subjective) and stereotypes.
- Use short sentences – in general no more than 15 to 20 words long.
- Divide up text using questions and answers.
- Summarise and / or use bullet points to reinforce information
- Use the [Simple Measure of Gobbledygook \(SMOG\) calculator](#) to measure the readability of your information. The SMOG calculator estimates the years of education needed to understand a piece of writing.

Websites that produce good quality, accessible information

NHS
www.nhs.uk

NHS Behind the Headlines
www.nhs.uk/news

Patient
<https://patient.info/health>

Healthcare charities (e.g.
Macmillan Cancer Support or
Diabetes UK)

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

IFLA

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

With thanks to www.FactCheck.org

This infographic highlights eight simple steps that people can follow in order to assess the reliability and trustworthiness of a piece of information.

Created by **The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)**

If you would like any help with finding good quality sources of information or with appraising information our **Clinical Librarian service** is here to help.

Literature searches and training sessions are available for all staff to help support your information literacy skills.

For more details contact clinical.librarian@ulh.nhs.uk