

October is Health Literacy Month

For more than 20 years, October has been recognized as Health Literacy Month. Health literacy is multidimensional and goes beyond simply education level.

The definition of health literacy has 2 parts and includes an organization's responsibility to address health literacy and people's ability to use health information.

Personal health literacy: The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform **Organizational health literacy:** The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [ODPHP], n.d.).

The American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA's) Societal Statement on Health Literacy advocates for the role of occupational therapy in creating a health-literate society (AOTA, 2017). This includes developing, promoting, and implementing health education techniques and materials that are readable and understandable to all patients (AOTA, 2020; Grajo & Gutman, 2019).

Attard et al. (2021) conducted a scoping review of the evidence on health literacy in occupational therapy research. They found that despite the prevalence of low health literacy in adults, health care professionals are not consistently using health literacy strategies. In addition, they found that the occupational therapy literature on the complex concept of health literacy lacks clarity. Identified barriers to health literacy included no knowledge or education on health literacy, lack of resources and training. Continuing education and training on health literacy are beneficial. The authors provide several examples of where occupational therapy professionals can get continuing education on health literacy; the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), the CDC, and the Medical Libraries Association (MLA) offer professional education and training programs to increase health literacy skills at no cost to health care professionals.

Writing health information in plain language is an important but time consuming task. Ayres et al. (2023) conducted a study on the use of ChatGPT to simplify health information for people living in the community. The authors used multiple objective assessments of health literacy and found that ChatGPT was more effective at revising texts that were more complex to begin with. Overall, ChatGPT improved the grade reading score of texts (lowering it by 3.3 grades for complex texts), used less complex language, and removed instances of passive voice. It also retained 80% of the key messages. Based on the results the authors suggest that ChatGPT may provide a useful first draft that can be further refined.

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