

OP20.4

A WHO initiative: Health literacy - a way to engage and empower patients and families

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Background: According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health literacy has been defined 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’. Thus, health literacy goes beyond the transmission of information and a person’s capacity to read brochures or listen to instructions. Individuals should have access to health information relevant to their needs and be able to understand and use it appropriately. In this context, health education leads to health literacy and health literacy is critical to empowerment. By improving people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively, we will be able to engage them in health-care improvement efforts meaningfully. Patient and family engagement and empowerment can lead to better health outcomes, better care, better patient experience and lower health-care costs. A pathway to achieve this is to work to ensure that people are health literate so that they are enabled to make informed decisions, choose appropriate care options and seek health interventions appropriately.

Aim: The aim of this workshop is to explore ways to engage people and the community to strengthen their health literacy as well as to identify opportunities and key challenges.

Methods: This workshop will be an interactive session in which key concepts will be presented briefly showcasing different experiences. This will be followed by a brainstorming session where the audience will be asked to share ideas, experiences and reflections.

Results and Conclusions:

- Strategic actions to achieve health literacy identified;
- Identified participatory approaches to determine how people can develop skills and knowledge to overcome structural barriers to health, both in developed and low and middle income countries;
- Factors and actors that can improve health literacy identified.