

Bridging the communication gap: What do primary healthcare practitioners in New Zealand know about health literacy? What are their attitudes towards it, and how do

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Bridging the communication gap: What do primary healthcare practitioners in New Zealand know about health literacy? What are their attitudes towards it, and how do they implement any internationally developed health literacy tools?

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Abstract:

Health Literacy has been identified internationally as an important component of health equity. As a health consumer, being health literate includes having the ability to make an informed choice about health. As a healthcare provider or health educator, being health literate is having the ability to enable the consumer to become fully informed, even if there are barriers that complicate or hamper this ability. Many health literacy tools have been developed to support clinicians, including those in primary care, in communicating effectively with their patients. When properly utilised, these tools have the potential to improve the health outcomes for patients and also to reduce health system costs. The literature produced about health literacy has seen exponential growth, especially over the last eight years, due to increased recognition of its contribution to healthcare outcomes. This research examined whether General Practitioners (GPs) in New Zealand were aware of health literacy concepts and the specific tools that have been developed, and whether they were utilising them. Although some health literacy tools and strategies are being implemented by GPs, they are not necessarily realising this, as their concept of health literacy seems to be focused on the general literacy level of their patients. Health literacy tools identified tended to be in the form of print and online health education materials.

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