

# Chapter 11

## An Overview of Global Health Initiatives and Practices

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter presents the overview of global health literacy, the advances issues of global health literacy, global health literacy and the internet utilization, global health literacy and disease management, and global health literacy and diabetes. Global health literacy is the important subject that is related to the individual's ability to understand and manage any healthcare issue. Global health literacy should be enhanced through healthcare providers and healthcare organizations. Global health literacy can help people prevent their health problems, protect their health, and manage their healthcare problems in a timely and effective manner. People who understand health instructions usually make fewer mistakes when taking medicine or preparing for the medical procedures toward the reduction of medical errors in global healthcare.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Effective health care delivery is an essential issue for citizens and communities across the globe (Wickramasinghe, 2017). The growing complexity associated with using the health care system creates serious barriers to health care quality and access (Knight, 2017). One such barrier is the limited health literacy (Knight, 2017). Health literacy is about how patients understand health information about health and health care, and how they apply that health information to their daily lives, utilize it to make health-related decisions, and act on it (Kasemsap, 2017a). Health literacy deals with health behavior and the utilization of health services toward affecting health outcomes and health costs in health care settings (Kasemsap, 2018a).

Limited health literacy may lead to poor health outcomes and inappropriate health care utilization, particularly in patients with chronic diseases (Zuercher, Diatta, Burnand, & Peytremann-Bridevaux, 2017). Health-related issues have considerable impact on the lives of senior citizens and their well-being (Reychav & Azuri, 2016). To successfully assist patients in understanding complex health information

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and in navigating the health system, professionals must make the distinction between low literacy and low health literacy (Barnett & Kaske, 2012). Health care providers and nurses must have the ability to adapt care for patients with low health literacy, making health literacy education of medical and nursing students essential (Mosley & Taylor, 2017).

Health professionals can utilize a broad range of health communication strategies to ensure patients understand their options and share their health care decisions (Kasemsap, 2017b) with the utilization of mobile health systems (Kasemsap, 2018b) and health informatics (Kasemsap, 2018c). Health care workers need resources that focus on health literacy, and patients require the understanding of health care-related information in a user-friendly format (Faddoul, 2017). Incorporation of an educational program into clinical visits for patients with chronic disease improved disease-specific knowledge and prompted patients to become activated and involved in their care, improving health behaviors and outcomes (Eckman et al., 2012).

This chapter is based on a literature review of global health literacy. The extensive literature of global health literacy provides a contribution to practitioners and researchers by indicating the initiatives and practices of global health literacy in global health care.

## **BACKGROUND**

Health literacy is a growing concern as its relationship with health outcomes becomes clearer (Mackert, Ball, & Lopez, 2011). Health literacy is defined as a person's ability to act upon information about health (Nielsen-Bohlman, Panzer, & Kindig, 2004) and to effectively utilize such information to improve their health (Kaas, Stasková, & Šulistová, 2016). People with lower levels of health literacy create the higher emergency and health care costs (Mantwill & Schulz, 2015). Between one-third and one-half of all adults struggle with health information, and at-risk groups, such as the elderly, ethnic minorities, and those of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to have low health literacy (Nielsen-Bohlman et al., 2004).

Health literacy is recognized as a crucial element of patient safety (McCune, Lee, & Pohl, 2016). Along with increased awareness of health literacy, creation of strategies and initiatives, such as shared decision, plain language, and decision aides, have improved patient-centered approaches to facilitating the patients' ability to obtain and understand health information to the extent that they are able to affect a level of health autonomy (McNeil & Arena, 2017). By offering effective health information materials, older adults can play a more active role in their health care (Andrade, Silva, & Martins, 2017).

Functional health literacy focuses on both reading and writing skills that enable individuals to effectively function in everyday situations (Nutbeam, 2008). Inadequate functional health literacy is associated with poor recall of correct medication name, dosage, and administering frequency (Backes & Kuo, 2012). Interactive health literacy includes advanced skills that allow a person to extract information, derive meaning from different forms of communication and apply new information to the changing circumstances (Nutbeam, 2008). Interactive health literacy is associated with patients' perceived ability to organize care, interact with health care providers, and perform self-care (van der Heide, Heijmans, Schuit, Uiters, & Rademakers, 2015). Critical health literacy encompasses more advanced skills for analyzing information and for using information to exert greater control over life events and situations (Nutbeam, 2008).

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