

Organizations can respond to the health literacy needs of patients by improving health information and services and making them easier to understand, access, and apply

Bremer D, Klockmann I, Jaß L, Härter M, von dem Knesebeck O, Lüdecke D. [Which criteria characterize a health literate health care organization? A scoping review on organizational health literacy.](#) BMC Health Services Research. 2021;21:664.

What is the context of this review?

- Organizational health literacy is the degree to which healthcare organizations implement strategies to make it easier for patients to understand health information, navigate the system, engage in care processes, and manage their own health and care.
- Studies show that large percentages of the population have limited health literacy, which means that they have difficulty obtaining, understanding and acting upon health information and services, as well as making appropriate health decisions on their own.

Box 1: Coverage of OHT building blocks

This review addresses [OHT building block #4](#):

- 1) defined patient population
- 2) in-scope services
- 3) patient partnership and community engagement
- 4) patient care and experience (domain 18 – health literacy support)**
- 5) digital health
- 6) leadership, accountability and governance
- 7) funding and incentive structure
- 8) performance measurement, quality improvement, and continuous learning

What question is being addressed?

- What criteria make an organization a “health-literate organization”?

How was the review done?

- The authors searched multiple databases.
- A total of 639 documents were initially identified, 60 of which were included in the review after assessing their eligibility.
- This research was part of the research project OHL-HAM (Health Literate Health Care Organizations in the Region of Hamburg) funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (01GY1912).

How up to date is this review?

- The authors searched for relevant documents published up to July 2020.

What are the main results of the review?

- The review identified several criteria that characterize health-literate organizations. These were organized in six main categories (with 25 subcategories):
 1. communication with service users (patients, clients, family, or caregivers);
 2. easy access and navigation (for example, overall ease of transitions);
 3. integration and prioritization (for example, integration into planning or dedicated resources);
 4. assessments and organizational development (for example, evaluation, assessment, research and quality management);
 5. engagement and support of service users (for example, engaging service users when designing navigation systems, services, and information materials); and
 6. information and qualification of staff (for example, individual health literacy of staff).
- The review also identified 17 different tools that can be used to assess to what extent an organization is health literate.
- Organizational health literacy is complex concept and has many distinct criteria, but an agreed-upon, comprehensive framework is still missing.

How confident are we in the results?

- This is a recent and moderate-quality systematic review with an AMSTAR score of 6/10.

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