

# HEALTH LITERACY: A CHALLENGING SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH FOR NURSING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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## LETRAMENTO EM SAÚDE: DETERMINANTE SOCIAL DA SAÚDE DESAFIADOR PARA A PESQUISA E PRÁTICA DA ENFERMAGEM

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## LETRAMIENTO EN SALUD: DETERMINANTE SOCIAL DE LA SALUD DESAFIADOR PARA LA INVESTIGACIÓN Y LA PRÁCTICA DE LA ENFERMERÍA

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Since the Shanghai Declaration by the World Health Organization<sup>(1)</sup>, health literacy (HL) is one of the most important social determinants of health (SDH), the international community of academics, researchers and professionals in the field of management, assistance and formulation of public policies are reviewing their understanding of such concept. Faced with the lack of international consensus around the definition of HL, new conceptual propositions<sup>(2)</sup> position the HL in the theoretical perspective of complexity, whether in the individual, family, community, professional or institutional focus.

HL is a complex phenomenon, since it requires an understanding of its multidimensionality, disorganization and internal chaos, expression of certain repetitive patterns in its external manifestations. Thus, defining it becomes challenging, because SDH no longer refers only to the cognitive ability of the individual to decode, memorize, safely apply in their decisions the health information that professionals and health system offer to customers, but also know the resources distributed and available in your social network. Therefore, currently, the responsibility of professionals and health organizations<sup>(4)</sup> to be promoters of HL stands out. As a SDH, it is about conditions in which individuals are born, live, study, work, play, etc. Therefore, we affirm that it is no longer possible for HL to be researched, taught or applied only as a cognitive capacity or limitation. It is about incorporating the perspective of population health promotion<sup>(5)</sup> in its integrated dimensions that, if developed simultaneously, could ensure the conditions for effective health promotion actions. As in social environments (individual, family, professionals, etc.)

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interactions between lay and professional occur, it is in these spaces that interdisciplinary action in organizational context for the promotion of HL must take place. Highlight the responsibility of health managers and education for training new professionals, training and instrumentalization for educational practice of health promotion.

How to work and understand HL in the practice of nursing research and assistance in the various levels of health care incorporating such SDH as a target of integrated health promotion actions? How to insert HL in health promotion actions to strengthen community action, build healthy public policies, create support/support environments, develop personal skills and reorient health services<sup>(5)</sup>? How to stop the hyper-simplification of such complex and multidimensional process with strategies to overcome the various challenges in nursing research and practice? Barriers and possibilities were critically listed for such nursing practice in the context of the Unified Health System,<sup>(6)</sup> but what other strategies should nursing propose and test for this? We suggest some priority strategies:

1- Review the professional understanding of how HL, as a social condition, can be modified and improved by action-interaction with other social actors.

2- Expand the conceptual knowledge about HL through readings of international authors from various countries, such as Portugal, Australia, Canada to discontinue the uncritical import of a single and hegemonic care vision of HL clearly identifiable in scientific publications of Brazilian Nursing.

3- Innovate and contribute to the very conceptual definition of HL according to the socio-cultural and multiethnic perspective (increasingly in Brazil).

4- Approach the multiprofessional community of practice and research in HL, such as the Brazilian Health Literacy Network (<https://rebrals.com.br/>) whose educational and information resources reflect the benefits of its close collaboration with international experts.

5- Consult the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Health Literacy affiliated to CNPq ([dgp.cnpq.br/dgp/espelhogrupo/5310188111097283](http://dgp.cnpq.br/dgp/espelhogrupo/5310188111097283)) to identify consolidated Brazilian researchers.

6- Approaching the community of almost 230 professionals participating in a professional training course<sup>(7)</sup> taught by the authors in international cooperation with 10 Brazilian universities<sup>3</sup>.

In short, the moment requires conceptual and theoretical deepening, intellectual collaboration, partnerships between clients, professionals and managers so that the scientific community of Nursing can implement actions that produce more lasting results capable of substantially promoting health, autonomy and well-being for its clientele. Producing knowledge in HL on solid bases, unquestionably, can substantiate the evidence-based practice of nursing originated in the ethno-cultural diversity found in all levels of health care in Brazil.

### **Collaborations:**

- 1 – conception and planning of the project: Margareth Zanchetta and Katarinne Moraes;
- 2 – analysis and interpretation of data: Margareth Zanchetta and Katarinne Moraes;
- 3 – writing and/or critical review: Margareth Zanchetta and Katarinne Moraes;
- 4 – approval of the final version: Margareth Zanchetta and Katarinne Moraes.

### **Conflicts of interest:**

There are no competing interests.

<sup>3</sup> For free access to videos about the aforementioned course, contact the authors.

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