



## Health literacy and self-care in patients

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**Letter to Editor**

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### Dear Chief in Editor

Self-care is a process in which a patient uses his knowledge and skills to perform recommended behaviors. Therefore, patients should not only be able to obtain sufficient information about their illness and how to take care of them, they must also be able to use their knowledge in different situations and situations. In fact, patients for self-care and disease management, need to receive accurate and authoritative information to understand their condition as well as to collaborate on self-care programs [1]. Although doctors have historically been the most important source for health and medical information, but today, with the spread of media and the rapid dissemination of information through the internet, access to other resources is easy for the public. Therefore, patients' skills to achieve, accurate understanding and apply this information will have a significant effect on their health and well-being. These skills have recently been highly regarded as "health literacy" (HL) [2]. HL is defined as the level of individual capacity for gaining, interpreting, understanding basic information and health services that is necessary for a proper decision-making, and is divided into three levels of functional, communication, and critical [3].

In a meta-analysis study that summarizes the results of 85 different studies, the percentage of inadequate and marginal HL in the United States is estimated to be 25% and 20%, respectively. Also, in a study of patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure in two US hospitals, inadequate HL was reported to be 44% and 49%, respectively [4].

Various studies have shown that HL level is correlated with self-care behaviors in patients and people with higher levels of

HL are better at self-care skills [3-5]. Indeed, inadequate HL is a serious obstacle to self-care behaviors in patients with chronic diseases and can affect the participation of patients in self-care [3]. Also, the prevalence of chronic diseases is higher in people with inadequate HL [4].

Studies have shown that among the levels of HL, communication and critical HL skills are the essential and necessary factors for improving self-care in patients with chronic diseases

because these skills increase self-esteem patients improve their ability to communicate effectively with health care providers and patients' capabilities to participate and work with the health system [3]. These capabilities will ultimately enable patients to receive and evaluate their information from various communication channels and eventually operate in the field. In fact, critical HL is a prerequisite for achieving a proper understanding of the factors and determinants of politics and the

social that provide the environment for the Health promotion and healthy life [5]. On the other hand, communication HL, or having the necessary ability to correct communication, is the most important factor in how to perform self-care behaviors in patients [3,5], because the proper communication between health professionals and patients improves the understanding of patients' personal preferences and experiences, improve their awareness of the programs and the diagnosis and treatment of the disease, and ultimately provide a platform for questioning and expressing patient concerns and desires that all of these can be effective in improving self-care and ultimately the treatment process [3].

In this regard, it can be added that communication and critical HL have a wide range of skills and can provide the social and cognitive knowledge, skills, and necessary perception for proper management of the disease for patients [5].

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