



Age is related to the level of health information literacy among older people

Health information literacy refers to our competencies to find, evaluate and understand health related information in everyday life situations. Weak literacy can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust, insufficient adherence to treatment or to unnecessary worrying. A connection between health information literacy level and health status has been notified. Many studies show that health information literacy level of older people is generally lower than that of other adults. This study aims to find out the possible differences among older people.

The study is based on a population-based questionnaire data collected in GASEL-project. It focuses on examining health information literacy of older people and comparing it between genders and old age groups.

Third of the respondents experienced that it is not easy to assess the reliability of health information from the Internet. Almost 60 percent considered that the terms and sentences of health information are difficult to understand and that it is difficult to know who to believe in health issues.

In several other studies women's level of health information literacy has been observed to be better than that of men, but in this study such a difference was not observed. Instead, the oldest age group, those over 80 years old, had most difficulties relating to competencies of health information literacy.

The differences of older adults compared to other aged groups should be taken into account when designing services for them. For example scientific terms should be avoided and the content provider should be clearly stated.

This is based on scientific poster presentation:

Enwald Heidi, Kangas Maarit, Keränen Niina, Immonen Milla, Similä Heidi, Jämsä Timo & Korpelainen Raija (2015) Everyday health information literacy of older people in Finland – The GASEL project. European Health Literacy Conference, 17th – 19th November, Brussels, Belgium.

