

# **Health Literacy: What it is? What we can do about it?**

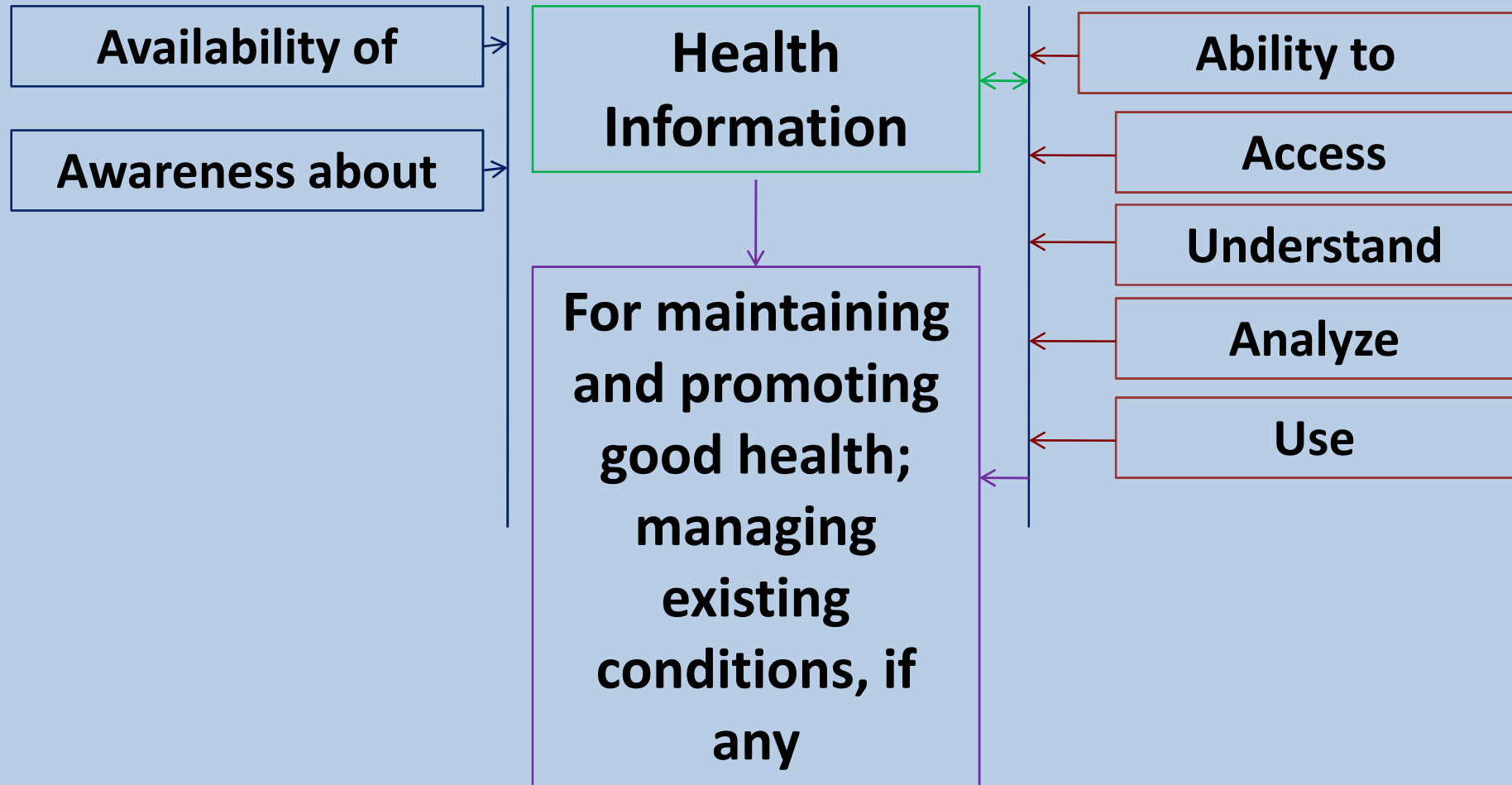
**Dr. Y.S. Sivan**

**Department of Community Medicine**

**PSG Institute of Medical Sciences & Research, Coimbatore**

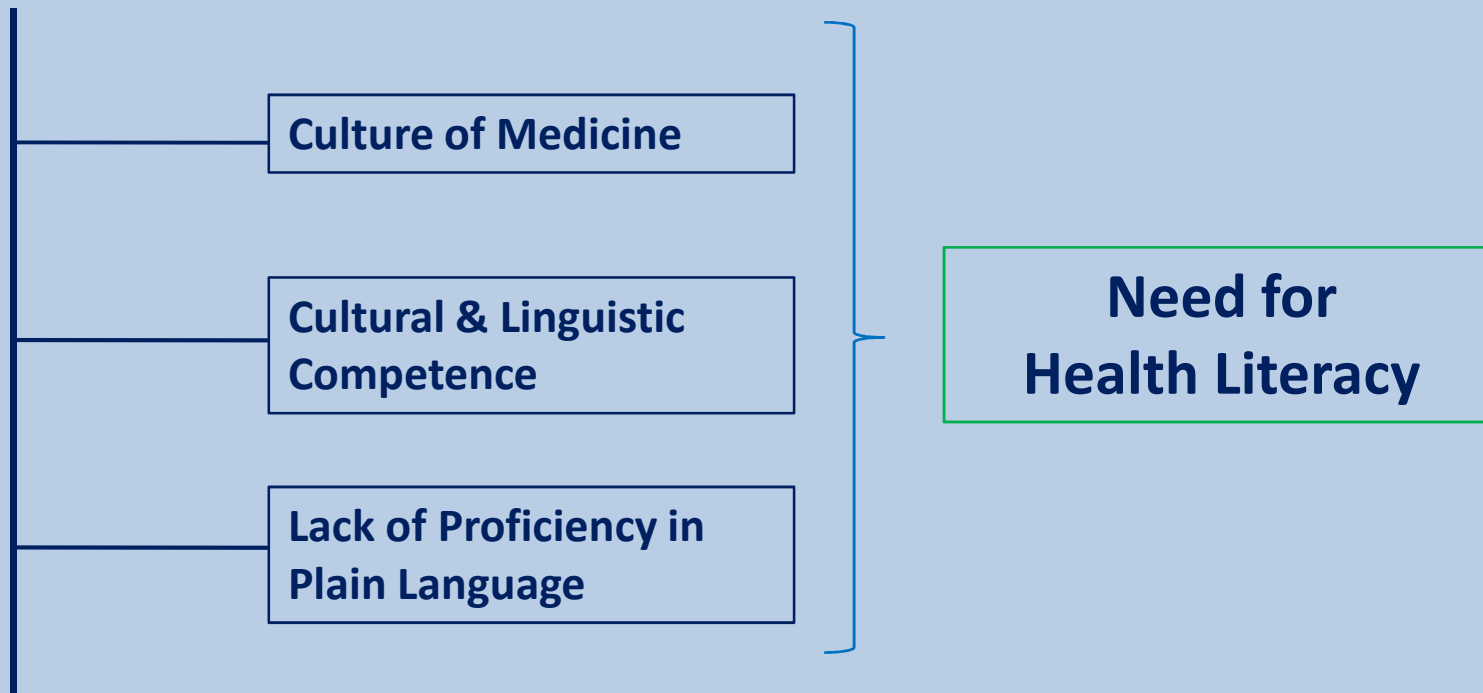
**Member, Standing Committee on Regional Affairs, International Health Literacy Association  
& Founder-Chair, IHLA Interest Group on Improving Health Literacy using Information Technology  
(I-HeaLIT)**

# Health Literacy



- Health Literacy means more than being able to read pamphlets and successfully make appointments.

# Health Literacy: Why?



- **USA: Only 12 percent of adults have Proficient health literacy.**
- **≈ 9 / 10 adults may lack the skills needed to manage their health and prevent disease.**
- **Cultural and linguistic competency of health professionals can contribute to health literacy.**

# Why is health literacy important?

## The fallout of lack of health literacy – Lessons from the USA

Description	%
Adults having Proficient health literacy	12
Adults having Below Basic health literacy (* ~ 30 million people)	14*
Adults with Below Basic health literacy who are more likely to report their health as poor (than adults with Proficient health literacy)	42
Adults with Below Basic health literacy who are more likely to lack health insurance (than adults with Proficient health literacy)	28

- **Low literacy has been linked to poor health outcomes such as higher rates of hospitalization and less frequent use of preventive services**
- **Both of these outcomes are associated with higher healthcare costs.**

• Source: National Assessment of Adult Literacy. URL: <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

• Source: Fact Sheet: Health Literacy and Health Outcomes. URL: <https://health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/factsliteracy.htm>

# Who is at risk?

Populations most likely to experience low health literacy

- **Older adults**
  - **Racial and ethnic minorities**
  - **People with less than a high school degree or GED certificate,**
  - **People with low income levels**
  - **Non-native speakers of English**
  - **People with compromised health status.**
- 
- **Education, language, culture, access to resources, and age are all factors that affect a person's health literacy skills.**

# Health Literacy, Health Education and Health Promotion

- Health literacy crucial in sustaining benefits of health education → Health Promotion, Management
- Prevention
- Treatment options
- Reading lab results
- SDM
- Compliance with Treatment Regimen
- Health promotion

## Break up of Health Literacy Studies in *PubMed* 1/2

Key words and Boolean Operators	Global	India
<b>“Health Literacy”</b>	<b>8693</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Health Literacy (MeSH)</b>	<b>3421</b>	<b>15</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Classification	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Economics	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Ethics	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND History	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Legislation and jurisprudence	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Methods	<b>412</b>	<b>1</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Nursing	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Organization and administration	<b>424</b>	<b>2</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Standards	<b>228</b>	<b>1</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Statistics and numerical data	<b>839</b>	<b>4</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Therapy	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
Health Literacy (MeSH) AND Trends	<b>77</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Health Literacy Measurement Tools</b>		

5/31/2019

YSS

Source: PubMed; date and time accessed: 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2019; 23:31 Hours – 23:44 Hours Eastern Time; USA.

## Break up of Health Literacy Studies in *PubMed* 2/2

Key words and Boolean Operators	Global	India
Diabetes	747	5
Obesity	216	2
CVD	495	1
Dengue	5	0
Diarrhoea	6	0
Dental health	532	10
Cataract	8	0
Anaemia	20	1
VAD	6	1
Antenatal Care	93	1
Postnatal Care	13	0
HIV OR AIDS	446	3
STD OR STI	22	0
Tuberculosis	31	3
Malaria	23	0
Hansen's Disease	0	0

5/31/2019

YSS

Source: PubMed; date and time accessed: 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2019; 23:31 Hours – 23:44 Hours Eastern Time; USA.



# Health Literacy: Avenues for Students & Faculty

- Incorporate into Student (e.g., PSBH) project work
- Incorporate into PG Dissertation work
- Conduct studies focusing exclusively on HL
  - Based on studies, send electronic messages to study participants?
  - Voice calls and images preferred\* (taking into account illiterates though videos are likely to get better acceptance)
  - Awards – e.g., IHA Awards, FAIMER-PTW, SPTW; IHME Roux, etc.

# Other avenues

- **Academy of Communication in Health Care**  
<https://www.achonline.org/>
- **International Association for Health Care**
- **Health Literacy Research Conference, BUMC**  
<http://www.bumc.bu.edu/healthliteracyconference/>
- **Association of Communication in Health Care**
- **(International Conference on Communication in Health Care)**
- **International Association for Communication in Health Care (EACH)**
- **International Health Literacy Conference**  
<http://hlc.iha4health.org/>
- **Institute for Health Care Advancement\***  
<http://hlc.iha4health.org/>
- **Training opportunities – Communication - DocCom: <http://www.doccom.org/>**

# International Health Literacy Association

- **Become a Life Member**
- **Get involved! Interest Groups**
- **Participate in Conferences! (International & Regional)**
- **Visit the website - “Become a Member”**
- **If you choose to become a member of an Interest Group, write to the Chair of the Group**

<http://www.i-hla.org/>



**IHLA**

International Health Literacy Association

*Thank You!*