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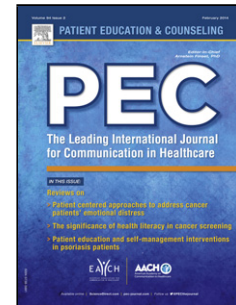
Title: The Role of Health Literacy in Predicting Adherence to Nutritional Recommendations: a Systematic Review

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The Role of Health Literacy in Predicting Adherence to Nutritional Recommendations: a Systematic Review

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Highlights

- First review on HL's impact on adherence to nutritional recommendations.
- HL was found scarcely determinant of patients' dietary adherence.
- Evidence on HL's impact on general public's nutrition behaviours is mixed.
- Most studies assessed only functional aspects of HL.
- Empowerment is likely to be a better determinant of patients' dietary adherence.

ABSTRACT

Objective: Synthesize quantitative empirical evidence on the role of health literacy in predicting adherence to dietary recommendations.

Methods: A systematic search of 13 online databases resulted in 1498 articles eligible for screening. Of those, 20 met the predefined inclusion criteria and, together with 6 studies retrieved from their reference lists, were included for review. Screening of full-texts, data extraction and quality appraisal were independently performed by two reviewers. Inconsistencies regarding eligibility were resolved through discussion.

Results: Of the 26 reviewed articles, 17 involved patients and 9 the general population. Overall, 35 associations between health literacy and various nutrition behaviours were observed. A significant direct positive association was reported in 5 cases, all of them concerning the general population. An insignificant association was reported in 20 cases, 15 of which were related to patients. The remaining associations were negative ($n = 2$), partially mediated ($n = 1$) or entirely mediated ($n = 7$).

Conclusion: Health literacy was scarcely determinant of dietary adherence and other nutrition behaviours, especially among patients.

Practice implication: Patients' dietary adherence is likely to be unaffected by interventions based on health literacy. Empowering approaches are expected to be more beneficial.

Keywords: Health literacy, Dietary adherence, Nutrition, Chronic Diseases, Systematic review

1. Introduction

The strong relationship between nutrition and health is widely acknowledged today: while adequate and well-balanced dietary practices are essential for the promotion and maintenance of good health throughout the life course [1], malnutrition represents a severe threat to human well-

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