

Promoting « health literacy friendly » healthcare institutions

At organizational level and with the participation of users

State of the art

Health literacy (HL) entails the capacity for citizens to access, understand and apply health information. A system approach is emerging, directed towards health organizations rather than towards individuals, in terms of their ability to take into account their users' level of HL. We use the notion of Health Literate Organization (HLO) as a conceptual framework (1).

Purpose

Our thesis project aims at assessing the strengths and weaknesses of local hospitals (Liège, Belgium) in terms of “organizational health literacy” and at launching remediation actions. By lowering the barrier created by overly complex information, we wish to ease care experiences especially for chronic multimorbid patients and promote primary care, understood in its broadest sense, that is more equitable.

Step 1 : “Top-down” approach, the Vienna HLO self assessment tool

In the frame of an international working group*, we have translated and culturally adapted for French a self-assessment tool (2) with the intention to run a feasibility study. Leaders in quality management inside local hospitals will be asked to run a prompt assessment of their institution regarding different aspects of HL and, on the strengths and weaknesses disclosed through this “organizational diagnosis”, a supportive toolbox will be proposed.

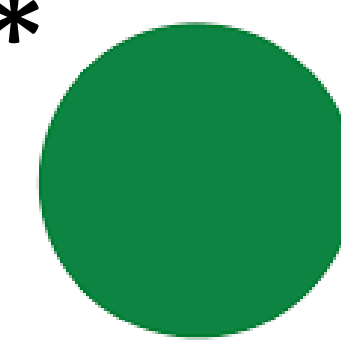
Opportunities

- Raising awareness on the topic
- Necessity of institutional support for any organizational approach of HL

Threats

- Expert / standardized process
- Institutional inertia
- No guarantee of (real) participation

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Step 2 : “Bottom-up” approach, a Participatory Action Research

In the frame of recently created patient committee (bringing together patients, workers and user's association)

Statements for debate

- Although worthy of criticism (3), we believe that the concept of health literacy could be a lever from which to work on quality and equity of care. How do primary health care workers in other settings feel with the concept ? Do they face resistances while promoting it ?
- Is our project somehow similar from existing field experiences ? How could we learn from them ? Create synergies ? Does someone want to join the international working group* ?
- On a strategic (and methodologic) point of view : is an patient committee a relevant place from which to launch a Participatory Action Research (institutional balance of power, research dynamic...) ?

1.Brach C, et al. Ten Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations. National Academy of Medicine 2012

2. Pelikan JM, Dietscher C. [Why should and how can hospitals improve their organizational health literacy?]. Bundesgesundheitsblatt Gesundheitsforschung Gesundheitsschutz 2015

3. Henrard G, Prévost M. ["Health Literacy", empty avatar or revitalizing concept?] Santé Conjugée 2016



Let's talk about it
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