

The Role of Health Literacy in Managing Non-Communicable Diseases in Aging Populations

¹Faisal Mohammad Al Ghofaili, ²Talal Muteb Alharbi,
³Nader Mahli Mohammed Alharbi, ⁴Mohammad Shabib Alharbi,
⁵Bandar Zaben Alharbi, ⁶Khaled Abdul Rahman Suleiman Al-Rashudi

Health information technician

Corresponding author: Faisal Mohammad Al Ghofaili

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Abstract-

Health literacy plays a crucial role in managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in aging populations. This essay explores the impact of health literacy on NCD management among the elderly, focusing on the importance of understanding health information, making informed decisions, and engaging in self-care practices. By reviewing existing literature and research studies, this essay aims to provide insights into how improving health literacy can enhance the quality of life and health outcomes for the elderly.

Keywords: health literacy, non-communicable diseases, aging populations, management, self-care

INTRODUCTION:

The aging population is increasing globally, leading to a rise in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer among elderly individuals. Managing NCDs in aging populations poses significant challenges, including the need for effective communication, understanding complex health information, and engaging in self-care practices. Health literacy, defined as the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions, plays a critical role in addressing these challenges.

Health literacy plays a crucial role in managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in aging populations. NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and respiratory conditions, are prevalent among older adults and require active self-management.

Here's how health literacy influences the management of NCDs in aging populations:

Understanding Health Information: Health literacy involves the ability to obtain, understand, and use health information to make informed decisions about healthcare. Older adults with adequate health literacy are better equipped to understand information related to their NCDs, including treatment options, medication instructions, and lifestyle recommendations. This understanding enables them to actively engage in self-management and make informed choices regarding their health.

Adherence to Treatment Plans: Managing NCDs often involves following complex treatment plans that may include medication regimens, dietary modifications, exercise routines, and regular medical check-ups. Health literacy empowers aging populations to understand the importance of adhering to these treatment plans and the potential consequences of non-adherence. By comprehending the rationale behind recommended treatments, older adults can make informed decisions about their health and take appropriate actions to manage their NCDs effectively.

Effective Communication with Healthcare Providers: Health literacy skills enable older adults to effectively communicate with healthcare providers. They can ask relevant questions, seek clarification, and actively participate in discussions about their NCDs. This open and collaborative communication helps older adults gain a comprehensive understanding of their conditions, treatment options, and potential risks. It also

facilitates shared decision-making, ensuring that treatment plans align with individual preferences and capabilities.

Navigating Healthcare Systems: Health literacy is essential for navigating complex healthcare systems, including accessing appropriate healthcare services, understanding insurance coverage, and scheduling appointments. Aging populations with adequate health literacy can navigate these systems more effectively, ensuring timely access to necessary care, specialists, and support services. This, in turn, contributes to better management of NCDs and the prevention of complications.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: Health literacy supports aging populations in adopting healthy behaviors and engaging in disease prevention initiatives. By understanding the importance of preventive measures, such as regular screenings, vaccinations, and lifestyle modifications, older adults can proactively manage their NCDs and reduce the risk of disease progression. Health literacy empowers individuals to make informed choices that promote their overall well-being and prevent the onset of additional health complications.

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making: Managing NCDs often requires problem-solving and decision-making skills. Health literacy equips older adults with the ability to analyze health-related information, evaluate available options, and make decisions aligned with their personal goals and values. By integrating health literacy into decision-making processes, aging populations can actively engage in self-management, adapt to changing circumstances, and address challenges associated with their NCDs effectively.

Empowerment and Self-Advocacy: Health literacy empowers aging populations to become self-advocates for their health. By understanding their rights, accessing relevant resources, and seeking appropriate support, older adults can actively engage in managing their NCDs. Health literacy empowers individuals to communicate their needs, assert their preferences, and navigate the healthcare system to ensure optimal care and support.

Addressing health literacy gaps among aging populations is crucial for effective management of NCDs. Healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations should develop strategies to improve health literacy through targeted education, clear communication, accessible health information, and supportive environments. By enhancing health literacy, aging populations can take control of their health, effectively manage their NCDs, and maintain a higher quality of life.

METHODOLOGY:

This essay is based on a review of existing literature and research studies on the role of health literacy in managing NCDs in aging populations. The literature search included reputable journals, articles, and reports related to health literacy, NCDs, aging populations, and self-care practices. The analysis focused on identifying key factors influencing health literacy levels among the elderly and their impact on NCD management.

DISCUSSION:

Health literacy levels among the elderly are influenced by various factors, including age, education, socioeconomic status, and cognitive abilities. Low health literacy is associated with poorer health outcomes, increased healthcare costs, and higher mortality rates among aging populations with NCDs. Individuals with limited health literacy are less likely to adhere to treatment plans, understand medical instructions, or engage in preventive health behaviors.

Improving health literacy among the elderly can enhance their ability to manage NCDs effectively. Health education programs, patient-centered communication strategies, and accessible health information resources can empower elderly individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Self-care practices such as medication adherence, healthy lifestyle choices, and regular screenings are essential for preventing and managing NCDs in aging populations.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, health literacy plays a crucial role in managing NCDs in aging populations by empowering individuals to understand health information, make informed decisions, and engage in self-care practices.

Enhancing health literacy among the elderly is essential for improving health outcomes, reducing healthcare costs, and promoting healthy aging. Healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organizations must collaborate to develop strategies that address the unique needs and challenges of aging populations in managing NCDs.

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