Literacy and health outcomes
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Record Status
This is a bibliographic record of a published health technology assessment from a member of INAHTA. No evaluation of the quality of this assessment has been made for the HTA database.

Citation

Authors' objectives
Research has examined the effect of low literacy on a wide variety of health outcomes, but we are unaware of any published systematic reviews that have analyzed these relationships or examined interventions to mitigate the health effects of low literacy. To evaluate the existing research, we performed a systematic review to address two four-part key questions based on questions initially posed by the American Medical Association and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and put into final form in cooperation with our Technical Expert Advisory Group. The questions are as follows:

-Key Question 1: Are literacy skills related to: (a) Use of health care services? (b) Health outcomes? (c) Costs of health care? (d) Disparities in health outcomes or health care service use according to race, ethnicity, culture, or age?

-Key Question 2: For individuals with low literacy skills, what are effective interventions to: (a) Improve use of health care services? (b) Improve health outcomes? (c) Affect the costs of health care? (d) Improve health outcomes and/or health care service use among different racial, ethnic, cultural, or age groups?

Authors' conclusions
Low literacy is associated with several adverse health outcomes, including low health knowledge, increased incidence of chronic illness, poorer intermediate disease markers, and less than optimal use of preventive health services. Interventions to mitigate the effects of low literacy have been studied, and some have shown promise for improving patient health and receipt of health care services. Future research, using more rigorous methods, is required to better define these relationships and to guide development of new interventions.

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http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/tp/littp.htm

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