Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA)
A Target for Health Promotion and Primary Prevention?

The German HLCA Consortium

Paulo Pinheiro1, Eva-Maria Bitzer2, Uwe H. Bittlingmayer3, Susanne Jordan4, Pablo Zamora5, Ulrich Bauer6

1 Center for Prevention and Intervention in Childhood and Adolescence CPH; Faculty of Educational Sciences, University Duisburg-Essen, Germany
2 Institute of Sociology, University of Education Freiburg, Germany
3 Institute of Public Health and Health Education, University of Education Freiburg, Germany
4 Research School Institute Berlin, Germany
5 Faculty of Educational Sciences, University Bielefeld, Germany

Rationale
- Meaning of health literacy no longer restricted to functional skills; also addresses skills required to access, appraise and use health information
- Shift of focus from individual-level to population- and system-levels
- Empirical data highlight relevance of health literacy:
  - High prevalences of low health literacy levels in high-income countries
  - Inequalities in the distribution of health literacy levels within countries
  - Poor health literacy levels associated with decreased use of preventive services, poorer engagement in health-promoting behaviours, higher mortality/morbidity
- Poor or non-available information on health literacy in children and adolescents
- Limitations affect theoretical, conceptual and empirical data
- Contrasts to the importance given to health/young for human development, and for health and well-being throughout life

Conclusion: Health literacy may act in children and adolescents as an even more critical and modifiable factor for health promotion and primary prevention than in adults

The Consortium
- Launched autumn 2013 to promote multi-perspective research into health literacy in childhood and adolescence
- Transdisciplinary approach with academic and stakeholder partners from Public Health and Education
- Overall objective: Developing, adjusting, implementing, and evaluating theoretical, conceptual and methodological health literacy approaches linked to children and adolescents
- Implies the targeting of health literacy of adults/systems impacting on child development
- Work on basic research as well as on applied research
- Basic research: Theories, concepts and assessment tools
- Applied research: Mental health literacy and eHealth literacy

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Consortium’s Structure
- Three work blocks (WB 1-3), each including three subprojects
  - WBs grouped by topics: Basic research (WB1); applied research on mental health literacy (WB2) and eHealth literacy (WB3)
  - Two regional clusters: WB2: NRW, WB3: BW
- Steering Committee (SC) as supervisory body; monitoring consortium’s progress and quality assurance
- Consortium backed by scientific and stakeholder advisory board

Innovations and Expected Results
- Increased evidence on relevance of health literacy for childhood and adolescence. Improved understanding of causal pathways linking environmental factors with individual dispositions, health behaviours and health outcomes
- Availability of concepts and methods for children and adolescents
- First data on health literacy levels / profiles in children and adolescents
- Availability of health literacy education and training programs in Public Health, Education, and Social Work
- Knowledge about needs of children at risk, their families, and providers of healthcare, social services and schools for mental health literacy
- Implemented mental health literacy programs in teachers’ training
- Evidence on impact of a primary preventive intervention on media use in middle childhood; knowledge about needs of adolescents on eHealth services and impact of health inequalities on the use of eHealth information in adolescents

The Projects

Basic Research
- TeCoMo - Theories, Concepts and Models
  - University Bielefeld
- MoMChild - Methods of Measuring Health Literacy of Children
  - University Bielefeld
- MOHLA - Measurement of Health Literacy Among Adolescents
  - Robert Kohl Institute Bern

Mental Health Literacy
- NePP - Needs for Primary Prevention in Families with Mentally IIl Parents
  - Catholic University of Applied Sciences Paderborn
- PROVIDER-MHL - Parents Suffering from Mental Disorders and Their Unaffected Children in Municipal Child and Youth Services: A Multi-Level Survey on Professionals’ and Providers’ Skills
  - University Duisburg-Essen
- TEACHER-MHL - Health Promotion for Children of Mentally Ill Parents. Assessment and Promotion of Teacher-specific Mental Health Literacy
  - University Bielefeld

eHealth Literacy
- MEDIA PROTECT - Effectiveness of a Brief Parental Intervention to Prevent Problematic Screen Media Use in Children 4-7 Years of Age - A Prospective Cluster Randomized Trial
  - University of Education Freiburg
- PRETTY - Preaching to the Young? Digital Health Offers for Children and Adolescents
  - University of Education Freiburg
- eLMi - eHealth Literacy and Minor Health: An Ethnographic Study on Health-Related Use of New Media among Disadvantaged Adolescents with Russian and Afghan Migration Background
  - University of Education Freiburg

Participating Groups and Institutions
- Ulrich Bauer | University Bielefeld
- Uwe H. Bittlingmayer | University of Education Freiburg
- Eva Maria Bitzer | University of Education Freiburg
- Paulo Pinheiro | University of Education Freiburg
- Pablo Zamora | University Duisburg-Essen
- Susanne Jordan | Robert Kohl Institute Bern
- Thomas Mötke | Criminological Institute Hannover
- Paulino Pinheiro | University Duisburg-Essen
- Diana Sahrai | Arnold-Bergstraesser Institute Freiburg
- Pablo Zamora | University Duisburg-Essen

Stakeholder Advisory Board
- Michael Bittlingmayer
- Sabine Kickbusch
- Mark Schmaus
- Ilona Kickbusch
- Klaus Hurrelmann
- Rolf Rosenbrock

Scientific Advisory Board
- Marie-Luise Dirks
- Hannover Medical School
- Klaus Hurrelmann
- Hertie School of Governance Berlin
- Ilona Kickbusch
- Graduate Institute Geneva
- Jürgen Pelikan
- Ludwig Boltzmann Institute Vienna
- Günther Wolfswinkler
- Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband Berlin
- Michael Bellwinkel
- BKK Bundesverband Essen

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Contact
- Coordinator
  - Ulrich Bauer | University Bielefeld
- Paulo Pinheiro | University of Education Freiburg
- Project Management
  - Pablo Zamora | University Duisburg-Essen