**Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA) as a Target for Health Promotion and Primary Prevention – The German HLCA Consortium**

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### Rationale

Current concepts no longer restrict the meaning of health literacy to functional skills (e.g., reading abilities, numeracy) but put emphasis on other skills required to access, appraise and use health information [1,2,3]. Integrative health literacy concepts address underlying competences and motivation as well [3], and therefore connect to the perspective of literacy as a social practice. The widened understanding of health literacy has also been recognized for its quality to shift the focus from the individual-level to social environmental forces impacting on health at population- and system-levels [1,3,4]. Empirical data substantiate the importance of health literacy. High prevalences of low health literacy levels in high-income countries and inequalities in the distribution of health literacy have consistently been reported. Findings on the association between health literacy and various health outcomes add to the relevance. Decreased use of preventive services, poorer engagement in health-promoting behaviours, in communicating with health professionals, in sharing decision-making processes, or higher mortality and morbidity rates are some of the outcomes associated with lower health literacy [1,5,6].

### The Consortium

The HLCA consortium was launched autumn 2013 to promote multi-perspective research (see Fig.1) into health literacy in childhood and adolescence with a transdisciplinary approach involving academic partners and stakeholder from Public Health and Education, and other working in settings relevant for children and adolescents in- and outside healthcare. The leading partners are located at the University Duisburg-Essen and the University of Education Freiburg.

The consortium aims at contributing to a comprehensive understanding of health literacy in children and adolescents by developing, adjusting, implementing, and evaluating theoretical, conceptual and methodological health literacy approaches linked to children and adolescents. Our approach includes an equally targeting of the health literacy of adults and systems with impact on child development. We will work on basic research as well as on applied research, here with a focus on health literacy and eHealth literacy. The HLCA consortium will be funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) from autumn 2014 – 2017.

### Consortium’s Structure

The HLCA consortium consists of three work blocks (WB 1-3), each including three subprojects. WBs are grouped by topics: Basic research (WB1); applied research on mental health literacy (WB2) and eHealth literacy (WB3). There are two regional clusters: WB2 will be implemented in North Rhine-Westphalia, WB3 in Baden-Württemberg. A synthesis project will be implemented in year three. A Steering Committee (SC) will act as supervisory body. It will be responsible for monitoring the consortium’s progress and for implementing a quality assurance process. The consortium will be backed by a scientific and a stakeholder advisory board.

### Innovations and Expected Results

- Increased evidence on the relevance of health literacy for childhood and adolescence. Improved understanding of the causal pathways linking environmental factors with individual dispositions, healthbehaviours and health outcomes.
- Availability of concepts and methods for children and adolescents.
- First data on health literacy levels / profiles in children and adolescents.
- Knowledge about needs of children at risk, their families, and provider of healthcare, social services and schools for mental health literacy. Improved understanding of barriers in access to health promotion and primary prevention. Specified recommendations for policy-making.
- Implemented mental health literacy programs in teachers training.
- Evidence on the impact of a primary preventive intervention on media use in middle childhood; knowledge about needs of adolescents on eHealth services and the impact of health inequalities on the use of eHealth information in adolescents.

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### Basic Research

- **TeCoMo - Theories, Concepts and Models**
  - University Duisburg-Essen
  - Development of a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual framework on health literacy in childhood and adolescence

- **MoMChild – Methods of Measuring Health Literacy of Children**
  - University Duisburg-Essen
  - Development of a questionnaire to assess functional, communicative and dispositional health literacy of 9- and 10-year-old children

- **MOHLAA – Measurement of Health Literacy Among Adolescents**
  - Robert-Koch-Institut Berlin
  - Development of an assessment tool measuring health literacy of adolescents in Germany

### Mental Health Literacy

- **NePP – Needs for Primary Prevention in Families with Mentally Ill Parents**
  - Catholic University of Applied Science Paderborn
  - Identifying problems of and challenges for child-oriented primary prevention from a family perspective with at least one mentally ill parent

- **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 Health Literacy**
  - University Duisburg-Essen

### hEalth Literacy

- **MOBI – Media Protection: Effectiveness of a Brief Parental Intervention to Prevent Problematic Screen Media Use in Children 4-7 Years of Age - A Prospectively 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 Minority Health: An Ethnographic Study on Health-Related Use of New Media among Disadvantaged Adolescents with Russian and Afghan Migration Background**
  - Arnold-Bergstraesser Institute for Social Research & University of Freiburg

### Participating Groups and Institutions

- **Ulfth Bauar** | University Duisburg-Essen
- **Eva Marie Biter** | University of Education Freiburg
- **Paula Blackman** | Criminological Institute Hannover
- **Stephan Drucks** | University Duisburg-Essen
- **Maria Jochinsen** | Essen College of Gender Studies
- **Susanne Jordan** | Robert Koch Institute Berlin
- **Fabian Kasii** | University Duisburg-Essen
- **Albert Lenz** | University of Applied Sciences Paderborn
- **Thomas Mittke** | Criminological Institute Hannover
- **Paulo Pinheiro** | University Duisburg-Essen
- **Diana Sahra** | Arnold Bergstraesser Institute für Sozialforschung in Freiburg
- **Jürgen Wasem** | University Duisburg-Essen
- **Pablo Zamora** | University Duisburg-Essen

### Stakeholder Advisory Board

- **Marie Luisa Dickersbach** | Hase Mixed School
- **Klaus Hurrelmann** | Hertie School of Governance
- **Ilona Kickbusch** | Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
- **Kristine Sørensen** | Maastricht University
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### Scientific Advisory Board

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**References**


