

Accessibility and health literacy implications of allied health reports:

Views of allied health professionals who write reports about people with lifelong communication disability

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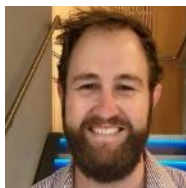


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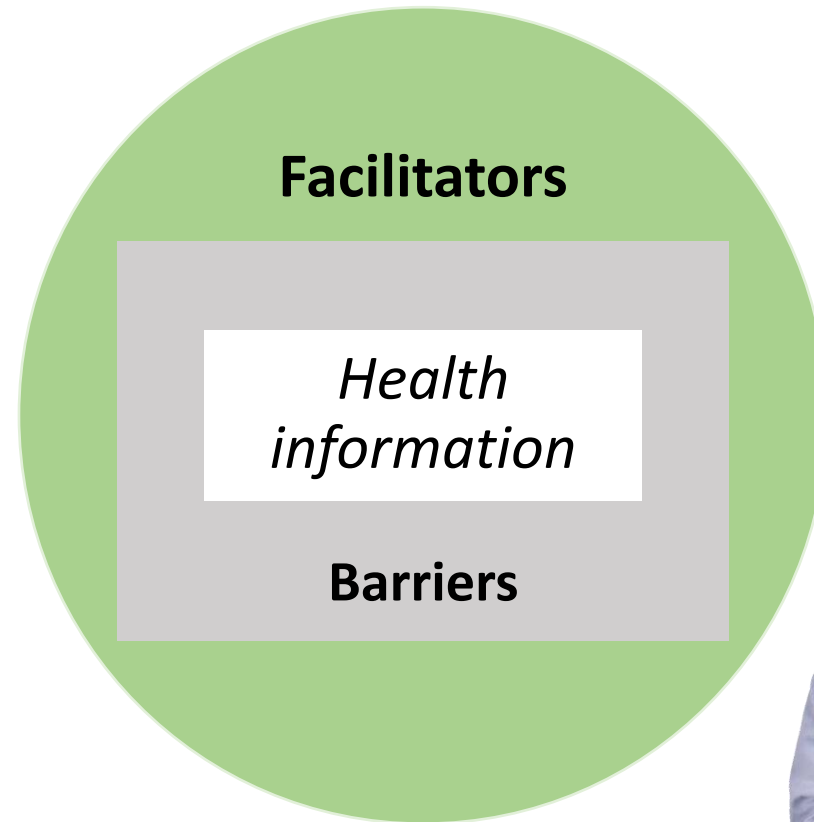
Background

- Allied health professionals write reports for various purposes and audiences
- Main audience in the past was other health professionals
- Audience for allied health reports has expanded to include:
 - People with communication disability
 - Families and carers
 - Funding body employees
- Limited research about allied health reports and the health literacy impacts of reports
- Limited research about the health literacy of people with lifelong communication disability
- People with lifelong communication disability have a right to access and understand their own reports but may not know reports are being written



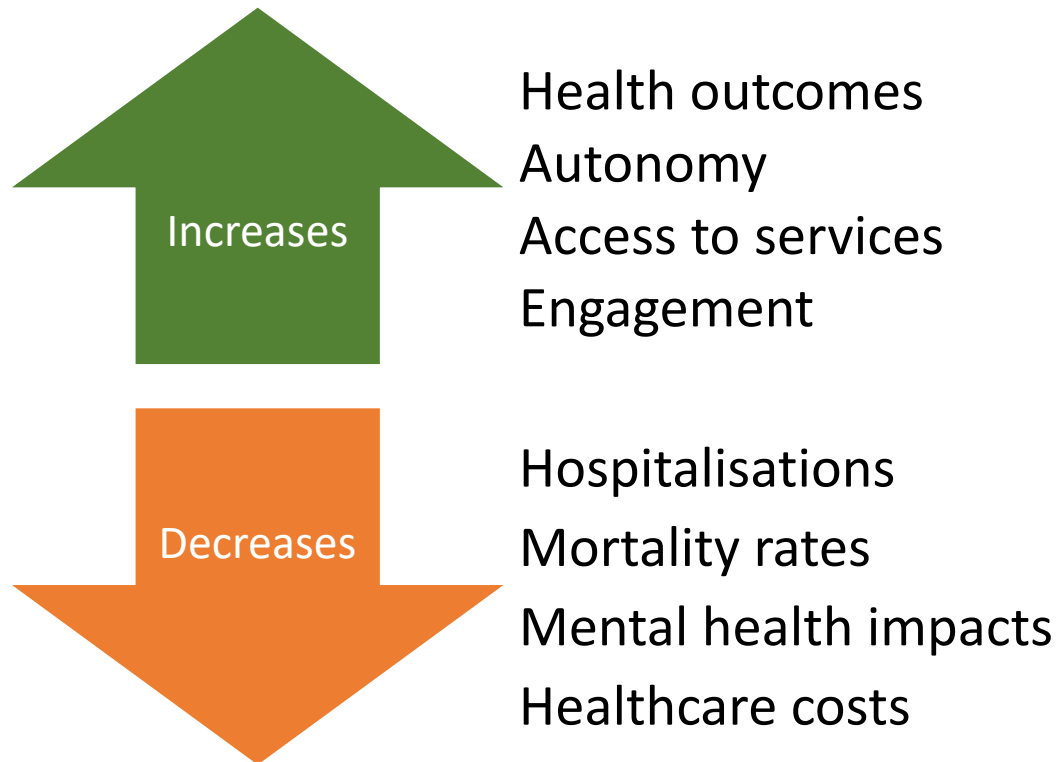
What is health literacy?

- Ability to:
 - Access
 - Understand
 - Appraise
 - Apply
- } health information
- In the context of:
 - Barriers
 - Facilitators



What is health literacy?

Supporting health literacy:



It is not just about individual deficits.

It is a way to improve services and supports for everyone.



(Berkman et al., 2011; Christy et al., 2017; Lie et al., 2012; Paasche-Orlow & Wolf, 2007)

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/national-health-survey-health-literacy/latest-release>

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What is health literacy?

A multidimensional concept:



Individual skills and abilities

5% have communication disability

12% have difficulty finding good health information



Intended or necessary actions

8% find it difficult to understand health information

17% can't appraise health information



Health objectives or goals

9% can't use information to actively manage health



Individual and service contexts

12% have difficulty engaging health providers

Psychological distress = harder to navigate health system



Timeframes (e.g., lifespan)

Younger people have more difficulty navigating health system

Older people have less social support for health care

Research aims

- Understand the experiences and opinions of:
 - *the readers and writers* of allied health reports
 - for or about people with lifelong communication disability
- Identify *barriers and facilitators* to improving accessibility of allied health reports and reduce health literacy barriers



Research methods

- In-depth interviews in person, phone, or online
- Online survey
- Reflexive thematic analysis with constant comparison
- Health literacy lens applied throughout

Participants

- Allied health professionals
- People with lifelong communication disability
- People in support networks of people with lifelong communication disability



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Results: Allied Health Professionals

Overarching theme

Sub-themes

The contexts influencing allied health report writers:

Personal and professional

Workplace and workload

Allied health professionals are:

Content creators

Using creativity

Creating accurate representations

Supportive advocates

Supporting access and understanding

Recognising importance and value of reports

Lifelong learners

Developing skills

Navigating scrutiny and feedback

Content themes

Sub-themes

Results: Overarching theme

Overarching
theme

Sub-themes

The contexts influencing allied health report writers:

Personal and professional

Workplace and workload

- Personal, educational, and work contexts influencing reports and report-writing
- System-required reporting misaligning with clinical reporting purposes
- Report-writing often lower priority than direct services, happening in unpaid hours

“You've done them in university... [with] very clear rubrics... This is a completely different scenario. You're working with real world people and... you've been part of their journey. That's different”
(PAHP10)

“I have a bit of a perception of what it's like to be reading stuff about yourself... as a professional I'm much more aware of what I [write in reports].” (PAHP3)

Results: Content creators

- ‘Creating’ reports based on what they had learned about a person
- Wanting reports to be accurate representations of the person
- need skills as well as confidence to make creative adjustments for accessibility

Allied health professionals are:

Content creators

Using creativity

Creating accurate representations

“[I] haven't done video... I've never figured out how to do it. And that was mainly an access issue on our end... We were never able to share the videos externally” (PAHP6)

“NDIS can say as much as they want that they're strengths based, but they're not... You write your reports based on what the person would be on their worst day because that's when they need the most funding”(PAHP3)

Content themes

Sub-themes

Results: Supportive advocates

- Viewed their reports as a valuable strategy for advocating for supports
- Aimed to be respectful and accommodate the needs of readers
- Diverse views, but reports are considered important and valuable for the purposes of accessing funding or supports

Allied health professionals are:

Content themes

Sub-themes

“We’re really advocating for our clients when we’re writing those reports” (PAHP2)

Supportive advocates

Supporting access and understanding

Recognising importance and value of reports

“I do see it as really important because... we're selling somebody's needs to a person in a way that hopefully they can understand very quickly and just use that information and act on it” (PAHP11)

Results: Lifelong learners

- All participants found report-writing difficult at some point in their career
- Wanted continuous improvement, in the absence of training and resources
- Reader feedback was considered valuable so that content was what readers needed and could understand

“I had to work really hard at report-writing... I did not find it easy” (PAHP10)

Allied health professionals are:

“I really do strive to improve my reports all the time.” (PAHP15)

“...it feels like I should be writing in a way that indicates that I know stuff, because otherwise they might think that I'm incompetent or something” (PAHP14)

Lifelong learners

Developing skills

Navigating scrutiny and feedback

Content themes

Sub-themes

Conclusions

- Health literacy involves accessing, understanding, appraising, and applying health information
- Reports contribute to health literacy barriers or facilitators
- Report-writing is difficult with complex influences
- Context and experience factors impact allied health reports
- The writers want their reports to be accurate representations that contribute to advocacy
- Feedback is valuable to support the writers to continue to improve reports



Implications

- There is an opportunity for allied health reports to contribute to health literacy of people with lifelong communication disability
- Report-writing needs to be funded and incorporated into allied health workloads
- Allied health professionals need access to more training and resources
- More feedback strategies between readers and writers needed
- Peak bodies (i.e., OTA, APA, SPA) and training institutions should support and promote more accessible reports for or about people with lifelong communication disability

Contact me. I can talk for hours on this topic but also happy to just share my publications!

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