Health literacy and personalized medicine

European Health Forum Gastein
2 October 2018

The Health Literacy Coalition
October is health literacy month

Every health care professional and organization has the ability and responsibility to increase health literacy by making health information easy to understand and health systems easy to navigate.

Cindy Brach
Health literacy

• **Health literacy** is closely linked to literacy and encompasses knowledge, motivation and competencies to access, understand, appraise and apply information to form judgment and make decisions concerning healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion in everyday life to maintain and promote quality of life during the life course with the support of professionals and systems to facilitate the process.

https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-12-80
Personalized medicine

• **Personalized medicine** is an emerging practice of medicine that uses an individual's genetic profile to guide decisions made in regard to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease.

• Knowledge of a patient's **genetic profile** can help doctors select the proper medication or therapy and administer it using the proper dose or regimen.

The National Human Genome Research Institute (2018)
https://www.genome.gov/glossary/index.cfm?id=150
Public health focus

Solutions

Challenges

Analytical scale

Biochemistry, Gene, Organ, Body system, Individual, Population, Ecosystem
4 translational phases of applying genomic discoveries

• Every stage involves scientific communication with professionals as well as lay people.

• The complexity of the matter poses an important challenge for the translation process of disseminating information to create knowledge and stimulate action towards personalized medicine.
Re-orientation towards people-centredness

Figure 1: Shifting the health literacy mind-set to enhance people-centred health services

Sørensen (2018) Shifting the Health Literacy Mindset to Enhance People-Centred Health Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, United States
Health Literacy is a critical component of the democratization of health

Ilona Kickbusch