

# Health Literacy Group UK Annual Report 2016



**Annual report of the Health Literacy Research Group  
Prepared by  
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## Introduction

The Health Literacy Research Group was founded in March 2007 by Professor Gill Rowlands and was awarded Special Interest Group status by the Society for Academic Primary Care (SAPC) the same year. Since our inception we have become a vibrant group continuing to deliver on our objectives and actively supporting the development of the research evidence base for Health Literacy (HL) in England. In this report we describe our conference and seminars, highlight achievements over the last year (March 2015 – April 2016), and describe our plans for taking the group forward.

## Mission Statement

As a multi-disciplinary group, our aim is to advance research, theory, education and practice on health literacy, drawing attention to its personal, social, economic and policy implications.

## Objectives

1. Develop a membership mix including, but not limited to, researchers, practitioners, educators, students and service users from a wide variety of backgrounds including medicine, emergency services, health and social care services, local authorities, the voluntary sector, policy arenas, the social and behavioural sciences and education
2. Share current health literacy research, theory, education and practice via:
  - a. A regular seminar programme and biennial UK conference
  - b. Social media, e.g. website, Twitter etc.
3. Influence health literacy policy by gaining membership on key local, national and international committees
4. “Future proof” the Health Literacy Group UK by continuing to explore options around how we are structured and how we are funded.

## Report on progress against aims and objectives

### Membership.

Membership is via the group website [www.healthliteracy.org.uk](http://www.healthliteracy.org.uk). Membership continues to grow and is currently 984 registered members and a ‘Twitter’ following of 1522! Members come from a wide range of backgrounds including:

- Health and Education practitioners;
- NHS Trusts – primary care, acute and specialist;
- Health and Education academics;
- Local government
- Policy makers;
- Libraries;
- Patient / disease-specific charities;
- Non-Government organisations.

We have members from the three devolved nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and from outside the UK – Hong Kong, the US, Canada, Israel, Australia, Spain and the Netherlands.

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## Sharing current health literacy research, theory, education and practice Conference

In March 2016 we held our UK biennial conference entitled 'Health Literacy at the Deep End: Addressing Health Inequalities at the Golden Jubilee Conference hotel, Glasgow.

The overarching aim of the conference was to share learning and examples of good health literacy practice with a specific focus on how it might contribute to reducing health inequalities across the four nations that are part of UK – Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The opening plenary gave a flavour of health literacy and health inequities across our nations with Prof Graham Watt from Scotland, Dr Joanne Protheroe from England, Prof Adrian Edwards from Wales and Dr Bernadette Cullen from Northern Ireland. The panel was chaired by Dr Graham Kramer – who refereed our very own 'Four Nations Championship'! The conference included stimulating posters, parallel presentations, workshops and great opportunities to network, topped off by an inspiring talk by Dr Catherine Calderwood, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland. We hope to take forward this inspiring conference and are looking at venues in Wales for 2018.

## Seminars

In addition to the conference, we have continued to run our themed seminars around the UK. These have continued to be exciting and well-attended meetings.

- Improving health information to promote health literacy (University of Leeds), March 2015
  - This seminar aimed to generate discussions and action plans on how health information can be improved to promote health literacy. Prof Gill Rowlands set the scene by presenting the scope of the problem on health literacy and health information in England. This was followed by Prof Theo Raynor's presentation on what we can learn from developing medicines information for patients; and finally Dr Peter Gardner talked about factors influencing the perception of side effect risk information. In the afternoon session, Laura Bolland provided an update from the Information Standard. This was followed by two parallel group discussions wherein participants shared good practice on how to make health information easier to read and understand; and how a strategy can be developed to incorporate health literacy into the development of nationally available health information materials.
- Health Literacy: making it everybody's business (Royal College of General Practitioners, London), June 2015
  - Influential, senior representatives from the fields of health, education, charity and politics outlined their vision and recommendations for embedding Health Literacy in policy. Dr Jo Protheroe opened the seminar with a personal reflection on the complexity of doctor/patient communication, followed by an

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overview of the RCGP report and NHS 5 year action plan by Prof Gill Rowlands'. After pausing for a very interactive question and answer session, Jill Roberts from the UCL Institute of Health Equity, presented guidance and examples of effective strategies being used to inform local action across the UK. In the afternoon session, Don Redding of National Voices, elaborated on the importance of person-centred care in the voluntary sector. He was followed by the final presenter of the day, Adrian Sieff from the Health Foundation, who ended this fascinating seminar by guiding us through a variety of approaches and strategies to health literacy.

Seminar presentations are available for download via the website [www.healthliteracy.org.uk](http://www.healthliteracy.org.uk).

## Policy Initiatives

This year we provided written and oral evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group: Primary Care and Public Health on the importance of health literacy.

[http://www.pagb.co.uk/scf\\_newsletters/documents/5YRFV\\_Behaviour\\_Change\\_Info\\_Signposting\\_15March16.pdf](http://www.pagb.co.uk/scf_newsletters/documents/5YRFV_Behaviour_Change_Info_Signposting_15March16.pdf)

## Website.

Our website continues to be a very valuable resource for the group and its members. It has the following functions:

- It acts as a resource for people interested in HL research, both in England and abroad;
- It engages new stakeholders
- It provides useful information and weblinks;
- It enables us to disseminate research by group members.
- Our website can be viewed on <http://www.healthliteracy.org.uk>

## Curated Resources

The Health Literacy Group and Community Health and Learning Foundation are working closely together to develop and compile a curated collection of health literacy resources. The project has been encouraged and supported by NHS England and will be accessible by the end of June 2016 on <http://www.healthliteracy.org.uk>

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## Health Literacy Group UK Steering Group members

- Joanne Protheroe: Chair
- Gill Rowlands: Joint Policy Lead
- Janet Solla: Joint Policy Lead
- Emeé Estacio: Seminar / meeting development
- Evelyn McElhinney: Treasurer
- Emma Brooks: Website and Communications
- Bernadette Bartlam
- Mike Oliver
- Sue Weir

Since the last annual report we had said goodbye and huge thanks to three Steering Group members, Jonathan Berry, Linda Clark and Cath Jackson. We thank them for all their hard work and enthusiastic contribution over the years, and welcome three new members – Janet Solla (Director of Community Health and Learning Foundation); Mike Oliver (Stoke Public Health) and Evelyn McElhinney (Glasgow Caledonian University). The steering group meets 3-4 times a year with face-to-face meetings and teleconferences.

## Summary

In the last year the Health Literacy Research Group has continued to develop and grow; we are revising our strategy in the light of our growth so that it is 'fit for purpose'. We will continue to develop and deliver our seminar programme, and plan to hold our next conference in spring 2018.

An important focus next year will be to continue to inform policy development in the NHS with, we expect and hope, a real impact on patient care.