

How Libraries & Literacy Contribute to Health

Marina Niks

October 13, 2011

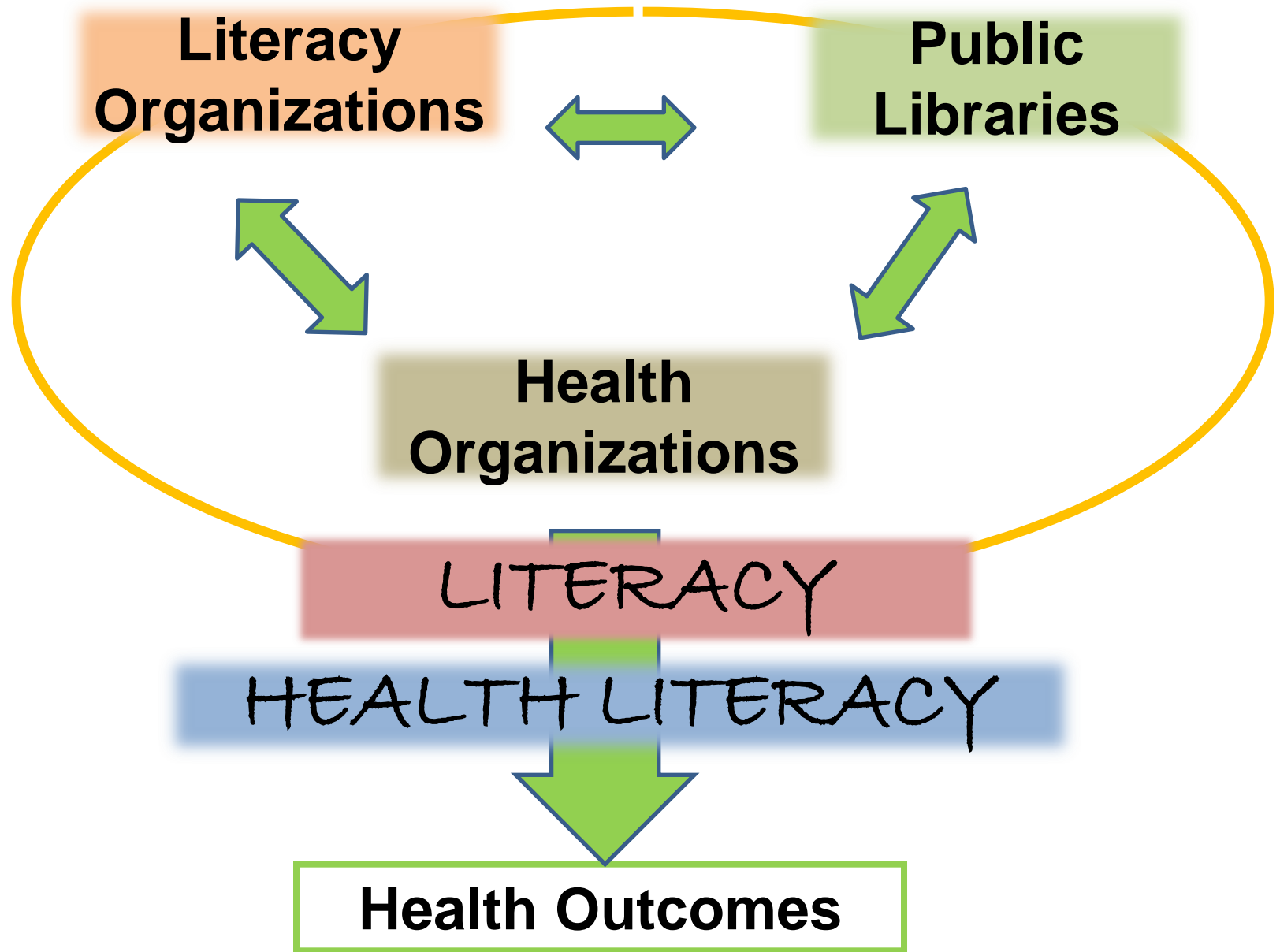
Citizens Series Webinar
BC Healthy Communities
Northern Health Authority

Public Libraries

Literacy



Health Outcomes



Literacy Organizations

Public Libraries

Health Organizations

LITERACY

HEALTH LITERACY

Health Outcomes



- Literacy and Health
- What is HL?
- What is happening in the province ?
- My perspective on the potential for work

Literacy and Health

Literacy is one of the most important factors influencing health status.

Perrin, Burt et al (1998) How Does Literacy Affect the Health of Canadians? Ottawa: Health Canada

■ **Direct effect**

- ✓ Preventative health practices
- ✓ Early detection
- ✓ (Chronic) disease management

■ **Indirect effects**

- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Income

HEALTH LITERACY is

The ability to gain **access** to, **understand**, **communicate** and **evaluate** health information to engage with the demands of different health contexts to promote and maintain good health across the life-course.

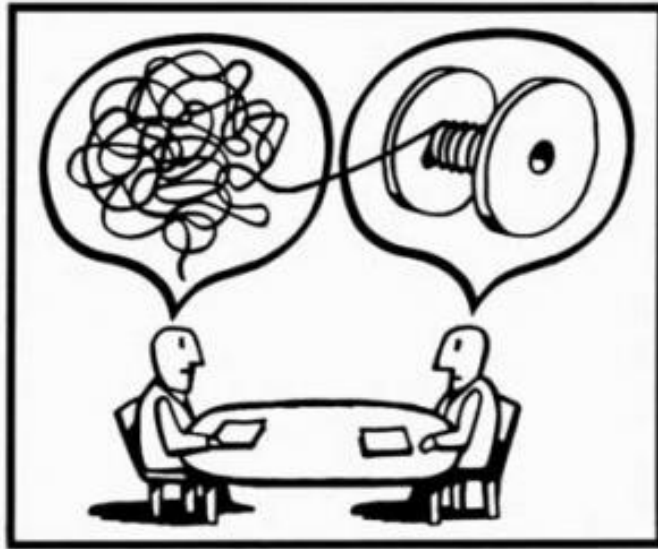
(BC Health Literacy Team, 2007)

ACCESS



- Individuals have different strategies to access information
- Systems emphasize written communication
- There's a need to better understand how groups/individuals learn

UNDERSTAND



- Language plays a critical role but not the only one
- Contextual, cultural, and personal factors shape how and where individuals relate to health issues
- Systems present challenges

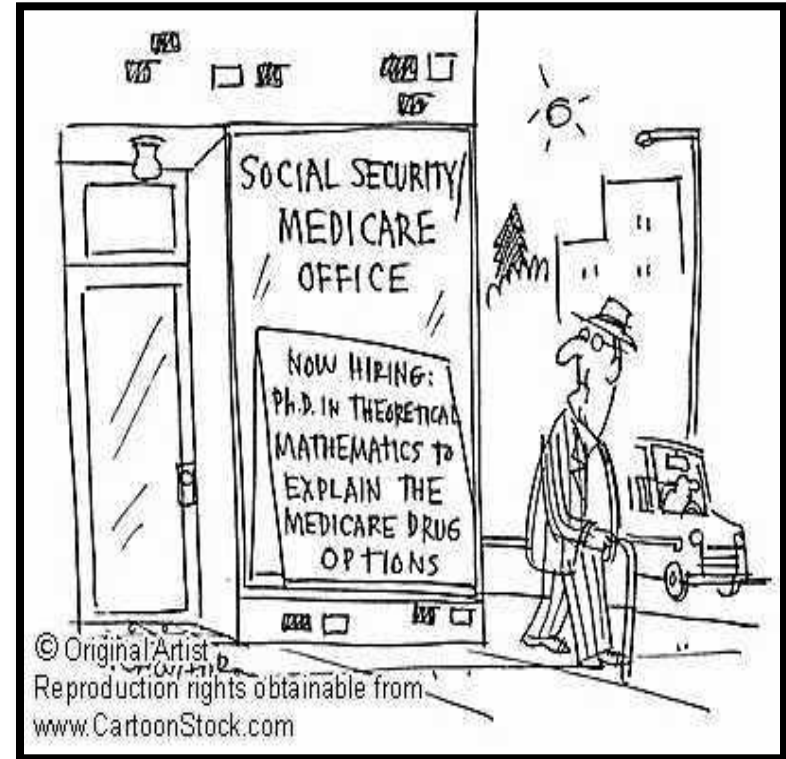
COMMUNICATE



Individuals need to feel comfortable, listened to, respected in their choices and values

EVALUATE

- Health information has become very complex
- Individual's lifestyle and values need to be considered as patients are supported to make choices



What is happening in BC?

- 2 Roundtables (2009-2010)
- HL Collaborative Prototype Project
- HL Summer School (2011)
- Networks:
 - BC HL Steering Committee and Advisory Committee
 - HL Health Authorities
 - Mental Health Literacy
 - HL and Public Libraries

My Perspective



- Acknowledging the effect of literacy on Health Outcomes is essential
- Health Outcomes are not the sole responsibility of one sector
- Working together is the best way to improve Health Outcomes

Some suggestions

- **Find out who is the Literacy Outreach Coordinator for your community**
- **LOCs can help you**
 - better understand who is being served and who is not
 - how to reach different groups
 - connect patients with adult learning opportunities
 - plan and deliver training
 - work with others
- **Public Libraries are a key community resource:**
 - in the community and open long hours
 - resources are free of charge
 - a variety of resources are available
 - friendly and knowledgeable staff to help you
 - it is a safe place to access resources, no stigma, no suspicion



Some ideas...



- Office/healthcare unit/library audit
- Literacy learners screen/test materials
- Health professionals attend literacy classes to present information, answer questions and hear suggestions
- Literacy practitioners, librarians and health professionals cross trained in plain language, communicating health information, etc.

Thank You!

Marina Níks
miniks@shaw.ca