



## Significant Health Literacy as Zest for Living in the Aging Society

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### Abstract

In the current changing society, the elderly need the zest for living. For acquiring satisfactory health care and management, an adequate degree of health literacy would be required. From the research of Health Literacy Questionnaire (HLQ) and Short Test of Functional Health Literacy` Assessment (S-TOFHLA), significant differences were found in living in urban areas, regular exercise, medical service-seeking behavior, occupation, self-care ability and others. For higher health literacy, the significance of cultural and recreational activities would be advocated, such as sports and music. This continuation would bring appropriate long-term care services and support (LTSS), leading to well-being, satisfaction and happiness.

### Keywords

Zest for Living, Health Literacy, Self-Care, Sports and Music, Self-Care Long-Term Care Services and Support

### Abbreviations

LTSS: Self-Care Long-Term Care Services and Support

Aging has been a crucial challenge in this century. Human life expectancy has increased with health care services [1]. The elderly population will reach 1.2 billion in 2025 and 2.0 billion in 2050 [2]. For the elderly, self-care has been a determining factor for maintaining health and preventing diseased conditions [3]. Regarding the definition, self-care behaviors have been learned through various experiences of well-being, improving life, treatment, and disease prevention [4]. The word "self-care" shows maintaining good health by usual positive activities and managing illness or disorders [5]. In each person, self-care plays an important role for the elderly [6]. It

can give improved QOL and elongation of life expectancy [7]. Consequently, the elderly hope to have longer enjoyable self-care and life [8]. People's interest in health has recently been in focus. Many middle-aged and elderly people aim for a healthy lifestyle by exercising daily and eating well-balanced meals. In Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) is promoting a long-standing project called "Health Japan 21" [9]. It is a 10-year plan in 2013 (the second term), and is related to the maintenance and promotion of mental and physical health.

As all generations live in a constantly changing society, they need the "zest for living" for fundamental ability [10]. They are i) Acquire basic knowledge and skills and utilize them appropriately. By thinking, judging, and expressing themselves, people can proactively respond and adequately solve various problems. ii) Cooperate with others while maintaining self-discipline. They have a satisfactory humanity with a heart-moving personality, such as caring for others with affection and spirit. iii) Practice educational activities to cultivate health and physical strength in order to live robustly. These "zest for living" were original concepts used for school-aged children and students. However, acquiring this skill during a young period contributes to realizing "healthy aging" for all generations.

This ability to access and use health information and services is called "health literacy". It is associated with various lifestyle habits. It has been an important core concept in health promotion, and means the integration of various skills and knowledge. They enable people to provide health-related information, in order to practice actual behaviors leading to better outcomes [11]. Consequently, health literacy seems to be one of the major important occupations of health strategy, policy and scholar. It is also a dynamic perspective that combines various kinds of health-related information and activity [12]. Health literacy survey was conducted with a multi-dimensional method in the community [13]. Subjects were 440 cases, and Health Literacy Questionnaire (HLQ) was applied. Several factors with significant differences included living in urban areas, secondary education, existence of health insurance, regular exercising, taking annual medical check-ups, and so on. The efficacy of the community-based intervention was evaluated for health literacy, self-care, QOL and social capital [14]. The protocol included 86 cases within a 12-week period. The content was 9 sessions of healthcare education and 3 local tours. As a result, the intervention group showed better QOL ( $p=0.026$ ), health literacy and self-care ( $p<0.001$ ) after 1 month compared with the control group.

For female subjects, health literacy skill was studied by the intervention ( $n=60$ ) [15]. Two questionnaires

were applied, which were Menopause-Specific Quality of Life (MENQOL) and the Short Test of Functional Health Literacy Assessment (S-TOFHLA). As a result, menopausal symptoms showed significant relationship with health literacy ( $p=0.029$ ) and occupation ( $p=0.046$ ). Health literacy would be crucial modifiable factor in the communities, which can influence QOL for menopause women. The degree of health literacy was studied for 260 females ( $60<years$ ) [16]. The results showed the relationships between health literacy and self-care ability, and experience of care programs. Health literacy and attendance of comprehensive geriatric care programs can influence better self-care.

It is important to select the adequate beneficial information for health and to extract only reliable and useful matter. This would be health literacy, which can be described as the ability to seek, understand and use the applicable information. In this respect, some people have high health literacy ability and some people have low health literacy ability. In the latter, a series of evaluation, judgment, utilization, and practice seems to be insufficient. To strengthen the zest for living, it is required to improve health literacy. For higher health literacy, various human relationships would contribute due to mutual interaction. Authors have been for years involved in medical practice, music therapy, sports, culture, and art [17]. Based on our research, we can advocate the significance of cultural and recreational activities such as sports and music [18]. During recreational activities, incidental opportunities will be present, providing consultation on various issues such as family, health, and medicine. For aged society, work-life balance has been emphasized associated with improvement of health literacy and recreational activities.

For elderly people, the research items include QOL, ADL and cognitive exams. In the case of the subjects with wider age distribution, a measure of self-efficacy would be an important factor to evaluate the zest for living [19]. It becomes a central matter of self-determination that relates to each belief for changing various activities in subjects involved in music [20]. Consequently, the higher each self-efficacy is observed, the higher degrees of psychological and physical health

will be expected. As a recent report, concepts of success and happiness were investigated for the subjects who are involved in music [21]. It included self-efficacy, which is closely related to four components. These factors are health, vitality, safety, and attitude. Furthermore, other perspectives were reported for the related factors leading to the successful lives of the elderly. They included happiness, development, meaningfulness, authenticity, balance, environment and various relationships [21]).

The elderly people may evaluate long-term care services and support (LTSS) from medical practice and cultural points of view [22]. They include cultural understanding, the role of culture, cultural competence, public health, QOL, and psycho-social needs for promoting health, happiness, well-being and satisfaction in life. In summary, several topics of health literacy of elderly were described. This article will hopefully become a useful reference for future geriatric research.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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