

Effectiveness of interventions to improve adherence in older adults with low health literacy: a systematic meta-review

B Geboers^{1*}, YK Loke², JS Brainard², C Salter², SA Reijneveld¹, AF de Winter¹

¹University Medical Center Groningen and ²University of East Anglia

*Contact: b.j.m.geboers@umcg.nl

Background:

Difficulty in adhering to advice from healthcare professionals may be one of the potential pathways that exert a detrimental effect on older adults with low health literacy (HL).

Research questions:

1. Are interventions to improve adherence and self-management effective in older adults with low HL?
2. Is HL associated with adherence and self-management in older adults?

Method:

- Systematic search of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in eight electronic databases.
- MEDLINE, EMBASE, ERIC, PsycINFO, CINAHL, DARE, Web of Knowledge, and The Cochrane Library.
- The selection procedure and data-extraction were conducted by two independent reviewers.
- Quality was assessed with the AMSTAR quality assessment tool.
- A narrative analysis was produced.



Results and discussion on interventions:

- Seven reviews (based on 13 studies) were found.
- Six reviews reported improvements.
- Existing adherence interventions are effective in older adults with low HL.
- Two types of interventions that are promising:
 1. Educating older adults about their disease (e.g. group classes).
 2. Support the change and maintenance of adherence behavior (e.g. telephone counseling).

Results and discussion on association:

- Seven reviews showed inconsistent results regarding the association between HL and adherence.
- The inconsistent findings might be the result of:
 1. Different reasons for non-adherence between people with high and low HL.
 2. The various measurement instruments.

Implications:

Adherence interventions seem to be promising for older adults with low HL. More research is required to determine which types of interventions are most promising for this target group.

Conclusive evidence lacks regarding the association between HL and adherence in older adults. This association also requires further study.

