

Getting in control

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Impact paragraph

Living with a chronic disease is challenging, especially for patients with limited health literacy. Limited health literacy is an important barrier for adequately dealing with a chronic disease. The self-management of patients with limited health literacy, the problems they encounter and research on self-management support were addressed in this thesis. This chapter reflects on the scientific and societal impact of this thesis.

Scientific impact

This thesis has scientific relevance, as it adds knowledge to an important field which have received increasing attention in the past decades. First, it demonstrates that the current scientific evidence base would benefit from a broader operationalization of both the concept of health literacy as the concept of self-management. It holds the potential to better represent the multiple aspects of health literacy needed for different self-management activities. Second, this thesis shows that research on this subject needs uniformity. The heterogeneity of the conceptualization of concepts as well as the heterogeneity in the description of the design of SMIs hinders the ability to learn from and thereby also improve interventions. Third, it was already known that tailoring interventions increases the effectiveness. This thesis provides the additional information to tailor SMIs to the outcome preferences of patients with limited health literacy. Third, this thesis adds the first insights in the health literacy levels of different ethnic groups in the Netherlands, which were previously unknown.

Societal impact

This thesis underlines the importance of special attention to the health literacy levels of patients. Patients with limited health literacy struggle with specific elements of self-management, which can be supported by health care professionals. As specifically shown in chapter 3 and 4, the relationship and the interaction between the health care professional and patients with limited health literacy has great impact. Besides, chapter 4 shows that patients with limited health literacy need special attention for the prerequisites of self-management before focusing on health related outcomes. Summarized, these findings call for an investment in time and effort in the self-management of patients with limited health literacy. Therewith, health care professionals can explore patient preferences, invest in communication, trust and the self-management skills the patient needs.

Dissemination of findings

Various channels were used to disseminate the findings of this thesis to researchers, policy makers, health care providers and other stakeholders. Since this thesis is partly funded by COMPAREU, the results are also disseminated through the channels of COMPAREU. The dissemination includes presentations and poster presentations on conferences, newsletters and dissemination through social media. All the articles in this thesis were published in international, peer-reviewed journals. All of the articles are accessible free of charge, since they are published open access. All articles are also available through the Nivel repository.