

## Factsheet

# Assessing Organizational Health Literacy in Hospitals

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The M-POHL OHL Consortium  
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Studies suggest that a **considerable proportion of the population has a level of health literacy that makes it difficult to find, access, appraise and utilize health information** regarding their own and other's health, well-being, health care and navigation of the healthcare system.

Hospitals play a key role in improving and accommodating health literacy among the population. They can **adjust organizational structures and processes to meet the health literacy needs** of people they serve, staff, and the local population in the region, who are the primary beneficiaries of enhanced health literacy. To reduce inequalities in health and health care, it is important that hospitals are health literate, i.e. that they take health literacy into account in their clinical and administrative services and organizational structure.

### Characteristics of a health literate organization



#### A health literate hospital ...

- ... implements organizational health literacy best-practices across all structures and processes of the organization,
- ...develops documents, materials, and services with stakeholders in a participatory manner,
- ...enables and trains staff in professional and organizational health literacy,
- ...provides easy navigation and access to services, documents, and materials,
- ...applies health literacy best-practices in all forms of communication with patients and significant others who help care for the patients,
- ...promotes personal health literacy of patients and significant others who help care for the patients during hospitalization and after discharge,
- ...promotes personal health literacy of staff with regard to occupational risks and personal lifestyles,
- ...contributes to promoting personal health literacy of the local population and to disseminating organizational health literacy in the region served.

## Assess organizational health literacy in your hospital

With the **International Self-Assessment Tool for Organizational Health Literacy of Hospitals – short version (OHL-Hos-SF)** you can assess how health literate your hospital is, i.e. you can evaluate the level of organizational health literacy. By self-assessing the degree of fulfilment of indicators associated with the characteristics of a health literate hospital outlined above, you can **gain insight into strengths, weaknesses, and potential for improvement regarding organizational health literacy**. The tool has 60 indicators of concrete, observable or measurable elements. Results can be used to identify, select, initiate and evaluate efforts tailored to enhance your organizational health literacy. Self-assessment is a method commonly used in organizational development processes.

**Experience from using self-assessments to enhance organizational health literacy in hospitals** shows that the services identified opportunities for improvement, raised the awareness of the concept of organizational health literacy among healthcare staff, encouraged teams to work together to initiate change, and improved team-efficacy.

 ... this was really useful. It made us realize that although we do a lot in practice, much of it is not reflected in our written procedures or guidelines. Such self-assessments are valuable and important for us, as they provide a foundation to further enhance our work with health literacy.  
(Finbråten et al. 2023) 

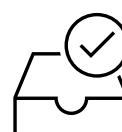
## How to perform the self-assessment and start the process of improving organizational health literacy

The self-assessment can be conducted for the entire organization or for specific units.

- It is important to **appoint a coordinator** for the self-assessment process in your organization. Coordinating the process includes establishing a self-assessment team and providing them with introductory information, collating the results from the individual assessments and organizing and summarizing the joint meeting.
- The **two main steps** of self-assessment are **(1) individual assessments** by several staff members of your organization assessing the fulfilment of the indicators in the tool (duration approximately 30 minutes), and **(2) a joint meeting** for discussing results and selecting priority areas for improvement (duration up to 3 hours).
- **Following the assessment, resources and time must be allocated to initiate interventions and develop policies.** This can be done either by the assessment team or a new team (e.g. a multi-disciplinary health literacy team).
- The self-assessments **should be repeated periodically** to evaluate progress and select additional interventions for improving organizational health literacy.

## Contact

To assess and enhance organisational health literacy within your hospital, please contact:



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