

# P 71 Health Literacy and Health-Promoting Behaviors in Chronic Disease Clients: A Survey of Adults in the North Central Region

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## INTRODUCTION

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions<sup>1,2</sup>. Persons living with chronic disease are those in whom adequate health literacy and health promoting behaviours would be most crucial as such persons would depend on health literacy skills more often than others. With a population that is ageing and incidence of chronic disease on the rise, an understanding of the current health literacy level of the population is paramount.

## OBJECTIVE

This study is an attempt to unravel the relationships that exist between health literacy and health-promoting behaviors among chronic disease clients in the North Central Region.

## DESIGN & METHODS

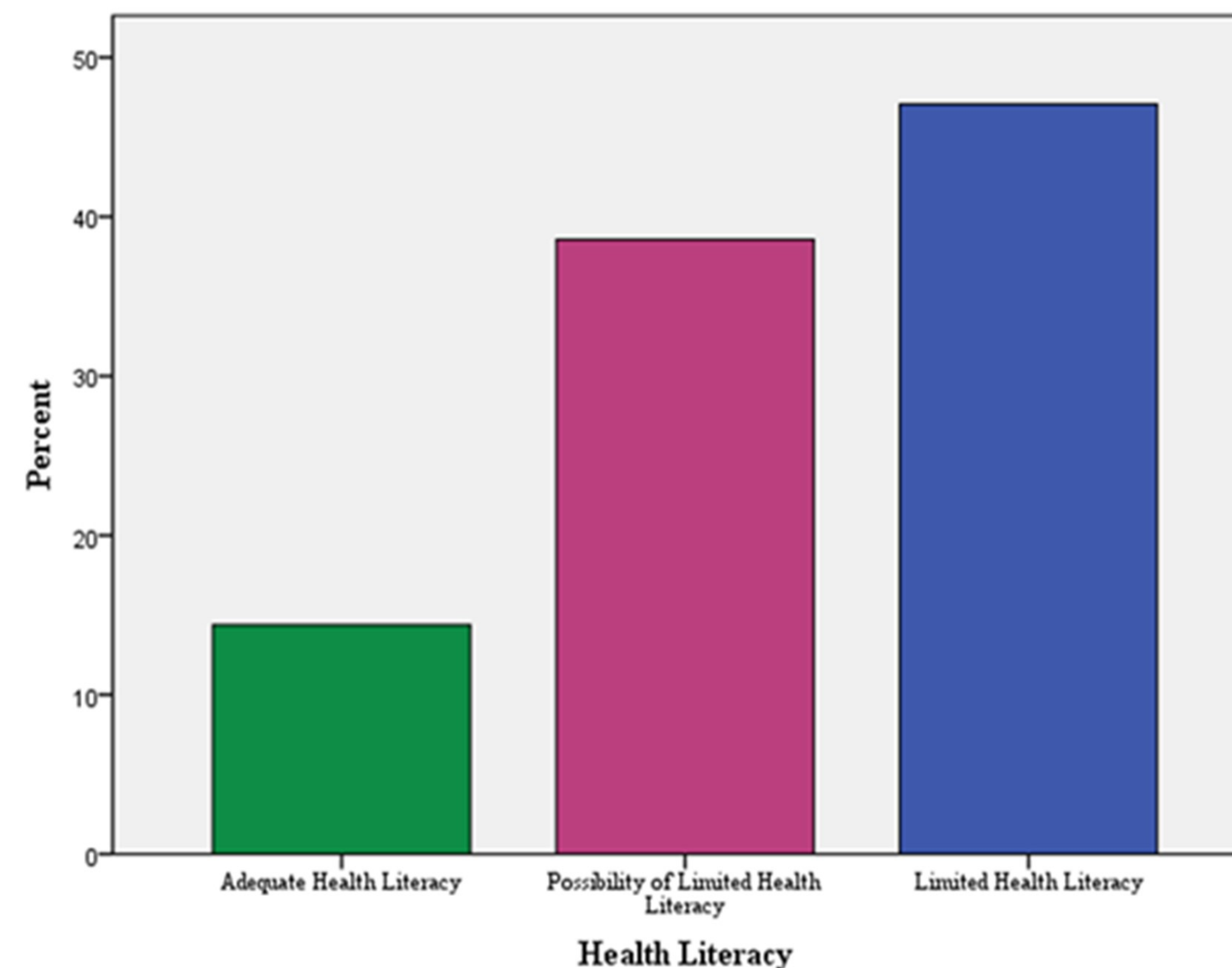
A cross-sectional random survey of 153 chronic disease clients from the Arima, St. Joseph and Chaguanas clusters. The Newest Vital Sign (NVS) tool<sup>3</sup> was used to screen for limited health literacy. Health promoting behaviors were measured using the Health Promoting Lifestyle profile II tool<sup>4</sup>. Self-reported measures on tobacco use, alcohol use and medication compliance were also documented.

## RESULTS

A mere 14.40% participants showed adequate health literacy, with most participants displaying either Limited Health Literacy (47.1%) or Possibility of Limited Health Literacy (38.5%). The mean score of health literacy was  $1.67 \pm 0.71$  out of possible 3.

Health literacy was weakly positively correlated to health-promoting behaviours with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r= 0.14$ ,  $n= 153$ ,  $p >0.01$ . Hence, we cannot conclude that there is a genuine relationship between health literacy and health-promoting behaviours. We therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis:

(H<sub>0</sub>): There is no relationship between health literacy and health-promoting behaviours in chronic disease clients in the North Central Region.



The Health literacy levels of participants as determined by the NVS tool

## Health Literacy and Physical Activity

It was interesting to note that all correlations between health literacy and the individual subscales of a 'Health Promoting Lifestyle' were positive except for that of health literacy and 'physical activity'. A weak negative relationship existed between these with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r= -0.01$ ,  $n=153$ ,  $p >0.01$ .

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).2000

<sup>2</sup> Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion. Institute of Medicine, Board on Neuroscience and Behavioral Health, Committee on Health Literacy. 2004

<sup>3</sup> Quick assessment of literacy in primary care: the newest vital sign. Weiss BD, Mays MZ, Martz W. Ann Fam Med.2005

<sup>4</sup> Health Promotion Model - Instruments to Measure Health Promoting Lifestyle : Health-Promoting Lifestyle Profile [HPLP II] (Adult Version). Walker, Susan N.; Sechrist, Karen R.; Pender, Nola J.1995

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we identified groups that are vulnerable to inadequate health literacy namely older adults and persons with low educational levels. The mean health literacy score was generally low, thus health professionals should pay more attention to the status quo. To reduce risky habits, educational interventions to improve health literacy should be simultaneously conducted in health promotion efforts. Teamwork should be applied to improve health literacy of older adults.