

Abstract

Introduction

Health literacy (HL) conceptualises how people access, understand, appraise, remember, and use health information (WHO, 2022). Independent of socioeconomic status, poor HL is associated with greater COPD severity, worse quality of life and higher urgent care utilisation (Omachi et al, 2012). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the relationship between disease severity and HL in patients with COPD.

Findings

A cross-sectional study used the Health Literacy Questionnaire (HLQ) to measure HL and the MRC breathlessness scale to assess COPD severity. Spearman's bivariate analysis was performed.

61 participants were recruited, 56% male, mean age 70+/-7.9, mean MRC 3.2+/-1.1.

A negative correlation was found between the domain 'having sufficient information to manage health' and the MRC score ($r=-0.27$, 95% CI[-0.50 to -0.01], $p=0.04$), in addition to a positive correlation between MRC score and 'Appraisal of health information' ($r=0.26$, [0.01 to 0.48], $p=0.04$).

Domain	Spearman's Correlation	95% CI	P-value
Feeling understood and supported by health care providers	-0.11	-0.36 to 0.15	0.39
Having sufficient information to manage my health	-0.27	-0.50 to -0.01	0.04
Actively managing my health	0.08	-0.17 to 0.31	0.55
Social support for health	-0.04	-0.30 to 0.21	0.77
Appraisal of health information	0.26	0.01 to 0.48	0.04
Ability to actively engage with healthcare providers	-0.07	-0.31 to 0.16	0.57
Navigating the healthcare system	-0.05	-0.29 to 0.19	0.68
Ability to find good health information	-0.08	-0.31 to 0.14	0.57
Understand health information well enough to know what to do	0.00	-0.25 to 0.25	0.98

Conclusion

Findings indicate people with increased COPD severity have greater self-reported skills in appraising health information, but reduced skills in having sufficient information to manage health. A lack of sufficient health information with increased breathlessness could contribute to poor health outcomes. These results highlight the importance of considering and investigating HL throughout the disease span and how the HL needs of patients are not static.