

## WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

# Developing organizational health literacy in primary health care: a learning network of 18 Belgian projects

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### Objectives:

- Introduce the Organisational Health Literacy approach to primary care practitioners
- Discuss the challenges posed by introducing OHL in primary care
- Share potential solutions for best practice in OHL in primary care
- Reflect on appropriate process and outcome measures for OHL in primary care

**Rationale:** The move towards active patient participation and informed decision making in health care has raised the interest in health literacy. Informed decision making requires sufficient knowledge about the possibilities, consequences, benefits and risks of interventions to make decisions that align with one's personal values and preferences. As such, health literacy, defined as a person's knowledge, motivation and skills to obtain, understand, evaluate, and apply health information, plays a key role in making informed health decisions.

While the importance of health literacy is generally recognized by primary care practitioners, to date most efforts to address it have focused on enhancing the skills of patients to understand and apply the information given by professionals, and of professionals to adjust their communication to patients with low health literacy. Yet, as the health care systems is often complex and demanding, health care organizations can also try to reduce the demands they place on patients and families by implementing policies, practices, and systems that make it easier for people to navigate, understand, and use information and services to take care of their health. This strategy is known as Organizational Health Literacy (OHL). Critical components of OHL include (1) improving access to and navigation of health care facilities and systems; (2) encouraging patient engagement in the health care process; (3) enhancing communication with patients and families; (4) establishing a workforce with OHL-related knowledge and skills; (5) creating an organizational culture and infrastructure supportive of OHL; and (6) meeting patient needs, such as provision of interpreter services and self-management support.

Efforts to introduce OHL are increasingly implemented with success in the hospital setting and, to a lesser extent, in other health organizations such as health insurance companies, but have thus far rarely been applied in the primary care setting.

The workshop will address the challenges posed by introducing OHL in primary care, drawing on the first-hand experience with 18 OHL projects launched in 2022 in Belgium with support of the Dr. Daniël De Coninck Fund (managed by the King Baudouin Foundation) and functioning as a learning network.

**Audience:** Primary care practitioners and managers of primary care networks.

**Workshop content:**

1. A short introduction to the concept and criteria of OHL and the 18 Belgian projects (10min)
2. Three short presentations of projects focusing on OHL in primary care (20min)
3. Discussion in breakout groups on challenges to introducing OHL in primary care (30min):
  - (1) Embedding health literacy in the organizational mission, structure and functioning
  - (2) Building relationships between health care professionals and service users around HL
  - (3) Developing HL through language, action and experience
  - (4) Co-creating with service users throughout the care journey
  - (5) Learning and evaluating across organizational boundaries
4. A plenary debate (20min)
5. Conclusion and summary of the learnings (10min)