

# Lower Health Literacy Linked to Poorer Cancer Care Outcomes

Cancer patients with lower health literacy reported worse quality of life.

November 25, 2021 By [Sukanya Charuchandra](#)

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Lower health literacy among people with cancer was associated with poorer experiences with care and worse a worse [quality of life](#), according to result from a systematic review published in [PLOS ONE](#).

In order to make informed decisions about their care, people diagnosed with cancer require clarity about their prognosis and the available types of treatment. Health literacy plays an important role, and low health literacy has been linked to worse outcomes.

Chloe Holden, a PhD student at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom, and colleagues conducted a systematic review to assess how health literacy relates to care and outcomes among people with cancer.

The team analyzed four electronic databases to find English-language studies of adults with cancer in which health literacy was measured with an validated tool and the measured outcomes were associated with health literacy. They also included qualitative studies that explored the role of health literacy when people make decisions about their health and care.

Of the 4,441 records that were initially selected, 66 papers, representing 60 studies, were ultimately included in the analysis.

The researchers found that lower health literacy was linked to more difficulty understanding cancer-related information, poorer quality of life and worse care experiences. Further, personal and contextual factors influenced how people processed information and made decisions about their care.

“Outcomes are poorer for those who experience difficulties with health literacy,” wrote the researchers. “Further efforts should be made to facilitate understanding, develop health literacy and support patients to become more involved in their care.”

Click to read the study in [PLOS ONE](#).

Click here to learn more about [quality of life for people with cancer](#).

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