

Multicultural Health Week 2018 : Health Literacy



KEY FACTS FOR MEDIA:

- Nearly one in three residents of NSW was born overseas and around 1 in 5 speaks a language other than English. Multicultural Health Week is a week that reminds NSW health services and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and the media that reaches them of the importance of providing equitable access to information and resources to Australians whose first language may not be English.
- The NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) is the coordinating agency for the NSW Ministry of Health of Multicultural Health Week since 2009 in partnership with the Multicultural Health Services from Local Health Districts.
- Dr Kerry Chant, Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health and Chief Health will launch Multicultural Health Week 2018 on Monday 3 September at the Liverpool Hospital Auditorium.
- This year's theme is Health Literacy. Health literacy is about how people understand information about health and health care and how they apply that information to their lives, use it to make decisions and act on it. The importance of health literacy is reflected in the National Safety and Quality Health Services Standards (second edition) www.nationalstandards.safetyandquality.gov.au/ developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare.
- The aim of Multicultural Health Week this year is to raise the importance of health literacy for health workers when working with people from multicultural groups.
- The tag line for this year is: **Talk, Listen, Ask – For Better Health**
 - TALK to consumers and check if they need an interpreter
 - LISTEN and respond actively to your consumers
 - ASK consumers and check if they understand
 - BETTER HEALTH outcomes through effective communication

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- Research shows that almost 60% of adult Australians have low health literacy which means they don't have the knowledge or skills they need to find, understand and use information about their health and healthcare.
- The health literacy of these communities is significantly lower than the general population. Of people with a first language other than English, approximately 75% had below-adequate health literacy, compared to 54% of people with English as a first language.
- When working with CALD communities, health literacy is more than language. Cultural factors play a significant role. Cultural practices and beliefs affect how people find, understand and respond to health information¹.
- Refer to link for more information on health literacy:
<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications/health-literacy-taking-action-to-improve-safety-and-quality/>
- It is not only the consumer's culture that can play a role. A health worker's cultural practices and beliefs along with their professional culture affect communication. Most professional cultures, like ethnicity, have their own way of expressing messages, their own codes, shorthand, symbols and expressions². Sometimes these differences can lead to misunderstanding.
- A number of resources have been produced to promote the messages of the week.
 - A poster in English promoting the week
 - Local health literacy projects and awareness activities undertaken by Multicultural Health Services at Local Health Districts and partner organisations
 - A toolkit designed especially for health workers supporting clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The toolkit contains information and resources to help raise awareness in health workers of the importance of addressing health literacy.
- See link to the Multicultural Health Week 2018 Health Literacy toolkit:
<http://multiculturalhealthweek.com/Article.aspx?ID=73&MediaId=0>

The toolkit contains the following:

- Useful tips for spoken and written communication and for helping consumers navigate health services (wayfinding).
- Information and practical tips such as using interpreters: assessing need for an interpreter, risks around using family members and friends to interpret, communicating through interpreters face to face and through a telephone interpreter, interpreting in family conferences and communicating through interpreters in mental health interviews.
- For written information, the toolkit covers tips on ways to improve readability of health information and preparing health resources for translations. In addition, there are case studies of how hospitals across NSW have worked with consumers to improve their signage to make it easier to find key health services, as well as conducting hospital tours for newly arrived migrants.

For more information about Multicultural Health Week 2018:

www.multiculturalhealthweek.com

[#MulticulturalHealthWeek18](https://twitter.com/MulticulturalHealthWeek18)

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REFERENCES

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (no date). Health literacy for public health professionals.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/training/index.html>

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (no date). Health literacy for public health professionals.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/training/index.html>