

# Exploring the Synergy between National Cancer Control Plans and Health Literacy Policies: Opportunities for Accelerating the Health Literacy Agenda

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## Description

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and it is estimated that 3.91 million new cases of cancer are diagnosed in Europe each year. Health literacy, defined as the ability to access, understand, appraise and apply health information, is an essential factor in the prevention, early detection and treatment of cancer. A recent systematic review examined the role of health literacy in national cancer control plans within the European Union (EU). The study found that all EU countries have national cancer control plans that explicitly mention health literacy, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of health literacy in cancer prevention and treatment [1].

The review also revealed a ripple effect, as all countries with national cancer control plans also have national health literacy policies or action plans. This synergy suggests that addressing health literacy is not only important for cancer prevention and treatment but also for overall health promotion and disease prevention. The study highlights the need for more research on the relationship between health literacy and cancer outcomes, as low health literacy can negatively impact cancer prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship. For example, individuals with low health literacy may have difficulty understanding the importance of cancer screening or may misunderstand their diagnosis or treatment plan, leading to poorer outcomes [2].

Furthermore, the review underscores the importance of addressing health literacy in public health policies and programs. By incorporating health literacy into cancer control plans and other health policies, countries can improve the effectiveness of their efforts to prevent and treat cancer, ultimately improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities. The study's findings suggest that the EU is making progress in recognizing the importance of health literacy in cancer control and prevention. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that individuals have the skills and knowledge to understand and act on cancer-related information. The systematic review of health literacy in national cancer control plans within the EU highlights the importance of addressing health literacy in cancer prevention and treatment. The synergy found between national cancer control plans and health literacy policies indicates that addressing health literacy is not only important for cancer but also for overall health promotion and disease prevention. Moving forward, more research and action are needed to ensure that individuals have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their health [3].

The importance of health literacy cannot be understated, as it is a crucial factor in improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities. While

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health literacy has been increasingly recognized as an essential component of cancer prevention and treatment, its role in other policy areas has not been fully explored. A recent systematic review examined the synergy between national cancer control plans and health literacy policies in the European Union (EU) and found that addressing health literacy can have a significant impact on cancer outcomes. The review also suggested that applying this synergy to other policy areas could accelerate the health literacy agenda, ultimately improving health outcomes. The study found that all EU countries with national cancer control plans also have national health literacy policies or action plans, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of health literacy in promoting overall health and disease prevention. This synergy suggests that addressing health literacy is not only important for cancer prevention and treatment but also for other health-related issues.

By applying this synergy to other policy areas, such as mental health, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, countries can improve their efforts to prevent and treat these conditions. For example, individuals with low health literacy may have difficulty understanding the importance of healthy behaviors or may not know how to manage their condition effectively, leading to poorer health outcomes. However, more research is needed to understand the impact of health literacy on other policy areas and to identify effective strategies for addressing low health literacy. While the synergy between national cancer control plans and health literacy policies is a promising development, more work needs to be done to ensure that individuals have the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about their health.

The identified synergy between national cancer control plans and health literacy policies can accelerate the health literacy agenda and improve health outcomes. Applying this synergy to other policy areas could have a significant impact on promoting overall health and disease prevention. However, more research is needed to understand the role of health literacy in other policy areas and to identify effective strategies for addressing low health literacy. Ultimately, improving health literacy is essential for promoting health equity and ensuring that all individuals have the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their health [4,5].

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

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