

Pharos

Pharos is the Dutch Centre of Expertise on Health Disparities. We employ our knowledge and expertise to get the quality and accessibility of health care up to the same standard for everyone. Prevention and health care must reach and work for everybody. This is especially important for people with limited health literacy, which is common among low-educated people, low-literate people and a large proportion of migrants. On average, these groups have a poorer health status and a shorter life expectancy.

For shared decision-making it is essential that clients and patients have access to suitable information.

Experience

Pharos has significant experience with eHealth and the development of appropriate information. A recent example is the 'Starting Together' app, which is in the process of being optimized for use by low health literate people in cooperation with TNO, Eaglescience, the Netherlands Centre for Youth Health (NCJ), GGD Amsterdam and GGD Hollands Noorden. We make use of blended care: the health care worker applies the App in his or her personal contacts with the client or patient such as during intakes or consultation to clearly define the request for help and customized information.

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eHealth development only successful with target groups involvement

It is hard to imagine our health care without eHealth. Making appointments through the internet, finding information online, using medical apps, consulting a health care provider online and digital self-help programmes are just a few examples. Patients and health care professionals are increasingly using eHealth and will continue to do so in the time to come. eHealth is still unsuitable for a large group of people

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Most eHealth applications disregard the large group of people with limited health literacy.

Apps and websites are usually not suitable for them, because these patients:

- find digital applications hard to use,
- do not know how to use an app properly or how to navigate a website,
- can not understand the information provided.

As a result they are unable to make the best use of eHealth applications. They miss out on information and do not receive appropriate care. Health disparities are therefore likely to increase in the future.

29% of all Dutch people have limited health literacy

1.3 million of Dutch adults are low literate

People with a low socio-economic status have shorter and less healthy lives and suffer from more diseases than people with a high socio-economic status

eHealth opens up new vistas

Pharos states that eHealth has a lot to offer people with low health literacy.

- Images and spoken text could be added to apps to provide better explanations.
- (Moving) pictograms could be used that are better geared to people's perception.
- Immediate feedback is possible, which could help to define a request for help.
- Explanation of care and possible results could then be tailored to the person requesting help.
- Digital information can be accessed multiple times, and can be shared with family and friends.

This is why Pharos encourages the development and use of simple eHealth applications which can be easily used by all.

Each health care provider is responsible for providing the information in a way geared to the client's and patient's perception.

How?

For the best possible and sustainable use of eHealth, it is necessary to develop applications with all parties involved.

- Clients and patients
- Health care providers
- eHealth (ICT) experts

Challenge

Pharos encourages both eHealth developers and health care providers to work together on eHealth initiatives with clients and patients from the onset. We call upon them to join us in this challenge. Pharos offers know-how and an extensive network within migrant, low-skilled and low-literate groups of people. We furthermore have excellent contacts among general practitioners, pharmacists, (para)medics etcetera. This makes Pharos the natural key partner in the network aiming to make eHealth applications work for all. Only through intensive cooperation the effective use of eHealth can be guaranteed for everyone.

Soon to come: eHealth competition for the best app

Pharos will soon call up on health care professionals and developers to present proposals for the best apps suitable for people with limited health literacy. Check our website www.pharos.nl

People do not receive the health care they need

It can be hard for people with limited health literacy to find their way in the health care system. Generally, they have trouble to find, understand, assess and use information on their own health or that of their family members. Health care professionals experience difficulties in recognizing low health literate people, to get information across in plain language and to ask the right questions to get a clear picture of a patient's situation.

