



Call for papers for Special Issue:

***Health Literacy and Education in the Digital Age: Social
Contexts and Emerging Challenges***

Guest Editors:

dr hab. Maria Świątkiewicz-Mośny, prof. UJ

dr hab. Magdalena Ślusarczyk, prof. UJ

Timeline:

- 15 September 2026 – deadline for the elaborated abstract (max. 800 words)
- 15 October 2026 – decision of acceptance
- 15 January 2027 – deadline for submission of the full paper

All manuscripts will undergo double-blind peer review.

Focus of the Special Issue

Health literacy (HL) is understood as a complex of communicative competence, knowledge and motivation to apply it (Sørensen et al., 2012) and is closely linked to social, cultural and economic capital. It is discussed at three levels: functional (basic skills for understanding health information related to literacy), interactive (skills for

actively engaging with health care providers) and critical (ability to critically analyse and use health information to exercise greater control over health decisions) (Nutbeam, 2008). In order to make informed decisions about health and life, individuals need to have a sufficient level of health literacy to enable them to take action to promote their own health.

However HL understood in this way needs to be embedded with digital knowledge and the ability to use online sources. An important element of e-HL is the critical evaluation and management of information sources. The development of health technologies becomes another element that forces the development of digital competences. The knowledge and skills to use health technologies and services to maintain and improve health remain crucial.

Extensive research (Berkman, 2004; Keller et al., 2008; Bush et al., 2010; Sørensen et al., 2012, 2015) has demonstrated the importance of health literacy in improving personal health choices, which in turn contributes to better global health outcomes. Informed choices require the ability to critically assess and use information related to health and illness prevention. However, health literacy alone is not sufficient: effective health policies, infrastructural conditions, and the level of social inequalities also play a crucial role in shaping health outcomes. Without supportive policies and equitable access to healthcare resources, even individuals with high health literacy may face barriers in making and acting upon informed health decisions.

Health literacy is particularly crucial for the younger population. It depends heavily on an individual's health capital, which can be influenced by socio-economic factors, and can begin to accumulate in childhood as a result of socio-economic conditions (Abel & Frohlich, 2012). These conditions shape health-related behaviors (Kuh et al., 2004), with parents playing a key role in transferring knowledge and skills to their children (Singh-Manoux & Marmot, 2005). Schools also have a significant role in enhancing health literacy, critical thinking skills, and reinforcing healthy behaviors as even despite legal requirements to include health education in school curricula, unhealthy lifestyles remain a major social problem among young people.

Health literacy is a multidimensional construct that encompasses communicative competence, knowledge, and motivation (Sørensen et al., 2012). However, its

effectiveness is deeply embedded in broader social, cultural, and economic contexts. Health literacy should be viewed not only as an individual competence but also as a form of social capital—shaped by access to resources, networks, and structural opportunities. Without systemic interventions, health literacy risks exacerbating inequalities, favoring those with existing social and economic advantages while marginalizing vulnerable populations.

The need to integrate health literacy with digital competencies is particularly pressing in contemporary society. The ability to critically evaluate and manage online health information (e-HL) is essential as digital technologies increasingly mediate access to healthcare services. However, socioeconomic disparities create digital divides, limiting opportunities for marginalized groups to develop these competencies. This issue will explore how to bridge these gaps through targeted education and policy interventions.

We invite to join the discussion about health literacy and education in digital age. We welcome abstract submission about following topics

- The role of schools and families in shaping health literacy
- Health education policies and their effectiveness
- The impact of digital and AI-driven technologies on health literacy (e-HL and d-HL)
- Socioeconomic disparities and their influence on health literacy development
- Measuring health literacy: methods and challenges
- The relevance of traditional health literacy approaches in the digital age

Please send the elaborated abstracts to the guest editors:

maria.swiatkiewicz-mosny@uj.edu.pl and [magdalena.slusarczyk@uj.edu.pl](mailto:magdalen.slusarczyk@uj.edu.pl)

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