

PB.11. Health literacy among Malaysian parents

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Background: Increasing trend of non-communicable disease among adolescents in Malaysia creates a huge question on how far is the health literacy of their parents as they are considered to be the primary gatekeepers of their children's health. The purpose of this study is to measure the level of health literacy among parents of Malaysian adolescents and to assess the demographic and socio-economic factors which contribute to the different level of health literacy status.

Method: This study is a cross-sectional health literacy survey utilizing universal sampling method. The sample consisted of parents of adolescence aged from 13-17 years old from 15 public secondary schools in central (Kuala Lumpur and Selangor) and northern (Perak) regions of Peninsular Malaysia. Urban and rural schools are included in the study. Health literacy was measured by European Health Literacy Survey Consortium Questionnaire (HLS-EU-Q) which was translated and validated for parents for Malaysian adolescence. Data were analyzed using univariate and multivariate regression techniques.

Results: Based on 647 valid respondents, it has been found that 19.7% of the respondent had inadequate HL, 37.5% has problematic HL, 31.8% has sufficient HL and 9.4% has excellent HL. Multivariate regression analysis showed low level of health literacy was significantly associated with education, ability to pay for medication, being accompanied to see doctors, betel chewing and self-perceived health status.

Conclusions: Low health literacy among adolescence parents showed significant association with their health status, health behaviors and health care accessibility and usage, thus methods in improving parents health literacy should be considered to ensure healthy and future economically productive population of the country.