

UNDERSTANDING the Concept of eHealth Literacy – A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Long-term data show that up to 87% of patients experience weight regain and recurrence of comorbidities within 2–5 years after metabolic bariatric surgery. The expansion of eHealth technologies offers potential to mitigate these outcomes through behaviour change interventions that support dietary and physical activity behaviours. However, the effectiveness of eHealth interventions depends partly on users' ability to identify credible information and engage appropriately with digital health tools. This ability, known as eHealth literacy, is therefore a critical determinant of eHealth effectiveness. Despite its importance, substantial variation in how eHealth literacy is defined and measured limits conceptual clarity and hinders the development and evaluation of effective eHealth interventions.

This scoping review mapped the evolution of eHealth literacy definitions and measurement tools over the past two decades. Drawing from 113 peer-reviewed articles (from initial 11,621 records) across six databases (PubMed, Embase, PsycINFO, MEDLINE, Engineering Village, and Cochrane), we identified five domains: (1) Knowledge; (2) Skills (cognitive, technical, critical, social, and applied); (3) Perceived competence; (4) Context (personal and system-level); and (5) Purpose. Early definitions and measurement tools inadequately captured the complexity of contemporary technologies, and the behavioural and structural barriers faced by users. Although, more recent research incorporates self-efficacy, motivation, privacy, and trust, existing tools remain limited in their ability to assess users' actual competencies.

By establishing a foundation for standardising eHealth literacy conceptualisation and measurement., this review highlights opportunities to develop more tailored equitable eHealth interventions for individuals with obesity within increasingly complex digital health systems.