Information Sheet 7

The Ophelia Approach to optimising health literacy

The Ophelia Approach is a system that supports the identification of community health literacy needs, and the development and testing of potential solutions. It allows easy application of evidence-based health promotion approaches to the field of health literacy.

The Ophelia Approach[1] involves the collaboration of a wide range of community members, community leaders, and workers to develop health literacy interventions that are based on needs identified within a community. Each Ophelia project seeks to improve health and equity by increasing the availability and accessibility of health information and services in locally-appropriate ways.

Ophelia means

Optimizing
Health
Literacy and
Access to health information and services

Key resources:

Batterham RW, Buchbinder R, Beauchamp A, Dodson S, Elsworth GR and Osborne RH. The OPtimising HEalth LIterAcy (Ophelia) process: study protocol for using health literacy profiling and community engagement to create and implement health reform. BMC Public Health 2014, 14:694

Link: **http://www. biomedcentral.com/ 1471-2458/14/694**

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The Ophelia Principles

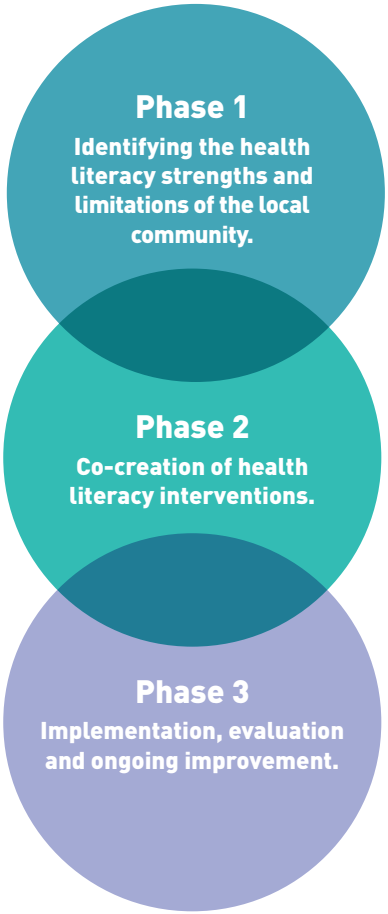
The Ophelia principles guide Ophelia projects and ensure that, at each phase, the potential to improve health and equity through health literacy responses is optimised.

Ophelia projects must:

1. Focus on improving health and wellbeing **outcomes**
2. Focus on increasing **equity** in health outcomes and access to services for people with varying health literacy needs
3. Prioritise **local wisdom, culture and systems**
4. Respond to **locally-identified health literacy needs**
5. Respond to the **variable and changing health literacy needs** of individuals and communities
6. Engage all relevant stakeholders in the **co-creation** and implementation of solutions
7. Focus on improvements at, and across, **all levels of the health system**
8. Focus on achieving **sustained improvements** through changes to environments, practice, culture and policy

The Ophelia Phases: 1 to 3

Each phase of the Ophelia process is drawn from three well-established methodological approaches: intervention mapping[1-5], quality improvement collaboratives[1,6-11], and realist synthesis[1,11-17]. Tools and resources have been developed to support implementation of each phase.



Health literacy data are systematically collected from a representative cross section of the community using a health literacy questionnaire and/or locally appropriate qualitative techniques. These data are analysed and presented to stakeholders for discussion and interpretation. Effective local practices and innovative intervention ideas are then identified.

Local stakeholders make decisions about local priorities for action. Interventions with potential to respond to local health literacy limitations or improve information and service access and availability are designed and planned.

Health literacy interventions are applied within quality improvement cycles, where organisations develop and implement trials, and actively improve the effectiveness, local uptake and sustainability of the interventions.

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Suggested citation

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