

Abstract

Background: Individuals with substance use disorders are likely to have low health literacy due to risk factors related to their personal and socioeconomic characteristics. Current knowledge is limited in understanding whether low health literacy contributes to adverse health outcomes and whether it influences the substance use behavior of this population.

Design: An exploratory cross-sectional study using a questionnaire survey.

Aims: To explore multidimensional health literacy and its correlates in patients treated in residential addiction treatment programs and investigate health literacy as a predictor of self-reported health indicators and quality of life.

Setting: Multiple residential addiction treatment programs (i.e., detoxification units, inpatient care, therapeutic communities) in the Czech Republic.

Participants: Data of 613 patients treated in residential addiction treatment programs for mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use (F10-F19, ICD-10) were analyzed.

Measurements: Health literacy was measured using the Czech version of the European Health Literacy Survey Questionnaire (HLS-EU-Q47). Data on participants' socioeconomic characteristics, self-reported health indicators and quality of life, substance use behavior, and treatment experiences were collected. Simple linear regression was used to estimate health literacy and its correlates. Hierarchical logistic regression was used to investigate whether health literacy has a direct effect on self-reported health indicators and quality of life when adjusted for relevant covariates.

Results: The mean score was 34.7 ± 6.7 out of 50 in HLS-EU-Q47. The prevalence of limited/low health literacy was 40.5%. Health literacy was associated with formal health education, household net income, housing conditions, employment status, and various patterns of alcohol use. Health literacy was associated with self-reported general health status, mental health status, and quality of life in the adjusted analysis. No relationship was found between health literacy and other variables related to substance use and treatment experiences.

Conclusions: Many patients treated in residential addiction treatment programs may have difficulties navigating the healthcare system and managing self-care to maintain and improve their health. Increasing health literacy should gradually improve their general health status, mental health status, and quality of life. Substance use behavior does not seem to play an important role in health literacy in this population.

Keywords: Health Literacy – HLS-EU-Q47 – Mental and Behavioral Disorders due to Psychoactive Substance Use – Alcohol Use Disorders – Substance Use Disorders – Residential Addiction Treatment Programs