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Electronic Health Literacy and Functional Ability in Mental Health Service Recipients: Relevance for Patient Engagement

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Electronic health literacy (eHL) is essential for individuals who navigate health information available online.[1]

For adults receiving mental health services, these skills influence not only how effectively they understand digital health content but also how confidently they participate in discussions about their care.

In the context of mental health care, limited eHealth literacy may restrict patients' ability to access reliable online resources and actively engage in decisions regarding their treatment and recovery.

Patient engagement in health-related decision-making requires the ability to access, understand, and critically evaluate health information.[2]

This study examined the level of eHealth Literacy among mental health service recipients and explored its relationship with functional ability and basic personal characteristics.

Aim: To assess the level of eHealth literacy among mental health service recipients and investigate its associations with functional ability and sociodemographic characteristics.

METHOD

A cross-sectional study was conducted during the **first trimester of 2023**, involving **200 adults** receiving **mental health services** from:

Outpatient Units

"Meleti" Cognitive Rehabilitation Clinic

Community Mental Health Centers

operated by the Mental Health Nursing Unit of Attica, Greece.

Participants completed self-administered questionnaires using Greek-validated versions of the following measures:

❑ **eHEALS**,

❑ **WHODAS 2.0**, and

they also provided sociodemographic information and their ICD-10 diagnosis.

The self-reported instruments captured participants' own perceptions and declarations regarding their digital health skills and functional ability.

Statistical analysis was performed using Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) to examine the association between WHODAS 2.0 scores and eHealth literacy scores. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

❑ Overall eHealth literacy levels were moderate. Mean eHL score = 25.3 (SD = 7.9)

❑ Functional ability was also moderate, with notable variability. Mean WHODAS score = 22.6 (SD = 8.2)

❑ 65.5% of participants showed higher functional ability (WHODAS < 24; n = 131)

❑ Higher educational attainment was associated with higher eHealth literacy. Participants with >15 years of education showed the highest eHL scores

❑ Age showed a small negative association with eHL, while women reported slightly higher confidence in using online information

❑ The majority of participants had schizophrenia spectrum disorders (F20)

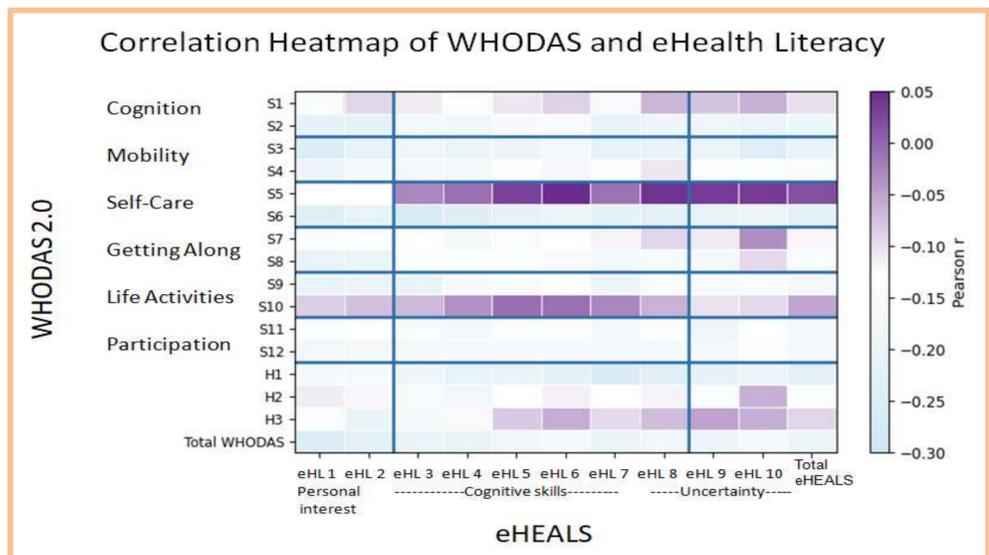❑ Higher functional ability was associated with higher eHealth literacy ($r = -0.21$, $p = 0.003$).

Figure 1. Pearson correlation heatmap between WHODAS 2.0 items and eHealth literacy (eHEALS). Higher WHODAS scores indicate lower functional ability; therefore, negative correlations indicate that higher eHealth literacy is associated with better functioning.

Pearson correlation coefficients ranged from approximately $r = -0.10$ to $r = -0.27$, indicating weak to moderate negative associations between functional ability and eHealth literacy.

CONCLUSION

Enhancing eHealth Literacy—especially appraisal and navigation skills—may promote greater patient engagement, autonomy, and involvement in treatment decisions. Targeted training initiatives could improve equity and outcomes in mental health services. These findings highlight the importance of integrating eHealth Literacy support into routine mental health care.

FUTURE WORK

Develop digital literacy training adapted to functional needs and integrate eHealth Literacy assessment into routine mental health care and rehabilitation programs.

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