

Digital health literacy and competency of public healthcare providers in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: A high level of digital health literacy and competency (DHLC) among healthcare staff is essential for healthcare transformation and the adoption of innovations in healthcare services and deliveries. **Objective:** This study aims to assess DHLC among healthcare staff in the Ministry of Health (MOH), Malaysia. **Methods:** A cross-sectional online survey was conducted in July 2022 via the MyGovUC portal applying the Digital Health Literacy Instrument developed and validated by van der Vaart & Drossaert in 2017. The instrument measured general and health-related internet use habits and skillsets, such as operational skills, navigation skills, information searching, evaluating reliability, determining relevance, adding content and protecting privacy. **Results:** About 531 healthcare staff, ranging from nurses (9.8%), assistant officers (32.6%), other officers (20.7%), pharmacy officers (8.3%), dental officers (7.3), medical officers (17.1%), and physician (4.2%) responded to the survey. The Cronbach's alpha (α) for internal consistency was found to be satisfying across all skillsets for both respondents with and without experience in posting health-related messages online (α : 0.645–0.924). Overall, staff with experience posting health-related content presented a significantly higher DHLC (p-value, $p=0.006$) compared to staff without experience, however, the overall DHLC were found to be desirable (61%–80% of total scores) to very desirable (81%–100% of total scores) according to sociodemographic, general and health-related internet use for both groups. **Conclusion:** Overall, younger staff with higher education levels were found to have higher DHLC which may be the powerhouse for transformation in healthcare services and deliveries in future.