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## MEDICAL LITERACY AS A BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF HEALTH-PRESERVING COMPETENCE OF AN INDIVIDUALS IN THE SPHERE OF HYGIENE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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In recent decades there has been a shift from a healthcare concept focused on specific risks and individual protective factors to a patient-oriented or anthropocentric concept of maintaining and improving health. In some areas of medicine, in the presence of a number of diseases of other organs and systems, for example, in the treatment of diabetes, the patient becomes an active participant in the treatment process and must have a very wide range of knowledge and skills to constantly maintain a satisfactory functional state of the organism [1, 2, 3]. But what about those people who do not suffer from chronic diseases? Whatever the answer of specialists, the opinion of society is obvious – the number of sites dedicated to medical, or pseudo-medical, information is incalculable, and reminders about methods of treating the most common chronic diseases are distributed in social networks at lightning speed. Thus, life itself, and not just theoretical research, suggests that preventive measures are the most effective health measures and should be carried out systematically, not pointwise, providing answers to a very wide range of questions [3, 4].

The next obvious issue on the agenda is the possibility of implementing global preventive work with the population and defining the essence of such work. We

believe that it is fundamentally important to carry out such work at school. Firstly, schoolchildren are in a sensitive period of forming personal attitudes and certain habitual forms of behavior. Secondly, organized groups create a kind of micro-society that will influence an individual. Thirdly, modern schoolchildren are the most active users of electronic communication methods, providing them with ubiquitous contact with “near-medical” information, the reliability of which they are unable to assess without the help of a professional. The simplicity of the above provisions does not at all indicate a global promotion of the concept of health-preserving competence in the field of hygiene of children and adolescents. In order to turn a child or teenager from an object of influence into an active participant, he or she needs to be given a certain tool with which he or she can critically assess his or her condition, realize his or her attitude to health-preserving activities, make a choice in favor of some action not “under duress”, but independently, even contrary to the opinion of peers. This tool is “health literacy”. The fact that the term, as well as its interpretation, are not widespread in Ukraine and neighboring countries, just indicates that the concept of preventive work with children and adolescents needs to develop clear mechanisms for the formation of their competencies in the field of health preservation.

So, what is “health literacy”? Health literacy is defined as one of the tasks of school education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which ensures the individual development of the competencies of each child so that he or she becomes a responsible and competent partner in maintaining his or her own health. In European scientific works, health literacy is often defined as the knowledge, desire and ability of a person to understand, evaluate and use medical information in such a way as to make a conscious choice every day in favor of maintaining health, preventing diseases and ensuring quality of life. Thus, health literacy presupposes not only a set of special cognitive and social skills and abilities, but also includes a motivational component in its structure, as well as the ability to make responsible choices regarding one’s health and the health of others. In light of the deepening idea of the importance of an informed choice of each person, the concept of health literacy has been conceptually expanded. There are functional, interactive and critical health literacy.

Functional (basic) health literacy is the ability to understand the content of medical information, the ability to make the necessary calculations and is mostly associated with the academic skills of reading, calculation, analysis and synthesis of information.

Interactive (communicative) health literacy involves the in-depth development of cognitive and social skills of an individual, which he or she uses to

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obtain the necessary information, support specialists and make an independent decision in relation to his or her own health.

Critical health literacy involves the adoption of certain social and political measures with an awareness of the significance of the influence of certain social, economic and environmental factors on health. In essence, critical health literacy implies not only a high level of knowledge on medical issues, but also civic activity aimed at transforming the surrounding world in order to maintain health: not only one's own, but also that of others.

A number of sources also distinguish between individual and public health literacy. In light of the latest healthcare reforms, the issue of increasing electronic health literacy (e-health literacy), which provides the ability to carry out online activities related to access to medical services, obtaining medical information, as well as the ability to critically evaluate information related to health issues and available on the Internet, has become relevant. Due to the inconsistency of the translation of the English term health literacy, researchers writing in other languages use the following synonymous terms: health literacy, sanitary culture, medical literacy, health awareness, medical and sanitary education, medical and hygienic literacy. At the same time, it should be noted that recently the term "medical literacy" has been most often used.

We consider it appropriate to introduce the term "subject medical literacy", which determines the level of an individual's mastery of specific knowledge, skills and abilities on individual topics related to health maintenance. WHO experts highlight the following priority topics for preventive work with adolescents: risky behavior, nutrition, physical activity, reproductive health, and injuries. The importance of determining the actual awareness of adolescents on these topics is difficult to overestimate. In particular, the results of a number of studies on tobacco smoking show that adolescents stereotypically state: "smoking is harmful," but an in-depth survey reveals their insufficient awareness of the specific effects of tobacco on various organs and systems, the harmfulness of passive smoking, etc. Insufficient subject medical literacy on this issue leads to a substitution of concepts: claiming that smoking is harmful, adolescents "put aside" their erroneous ideas that it is harmful not for everyone and only in very large quantities. So, to summarize: in the preventive and clinical areas of modern medicine, there is a need for a clear definition of the term "health literacy". If in European countries this term is widespread, deeply analyzed, structured and has received many definitions, then in Ukraine and neighboring countries, authors of scientific works often offer various options for formulating this term. The concept of medical literacy is little developed, but is certainly important, since it is the level of medical literacy that is the determining characteristic for the formation of health-preserving competence of an individual as a guarantee of his general physical, mental and social well-being.

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