

## BASCD 2024 Abstract #01

### Dental health literacy: A review of Health A-Z

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#### **Background:**

Forty three percent of adults in the UK have a reading age at, or below, that of a 9-year-old. This means they may not understand written health information. Disadvantaged groups are more likely to have limited health literacy, therefore efforts to improve health literacy and making information more accessible could help with reducing health inequalities. Health A-Z is an online health tool accessed through the NHS 111 Wales website that contains written health information.

#### **Objectives:**

The aim of this project was to assess the written information relating to dental health included in the Health A-Z tool. The objectives were to assess the accuracy and readability of the written content and provide actionable recommendations where content needs correcting or making more accessible.

#### **Methods:**

The Health A-Z section of the NHS 111 Wales website was searched for any pages containing written information relating to dental health, including guidance on accessing dental care. The content of each webpage was captured and assessed for accuracy against national guidance and subject matter expertise where appropriate. Readability was assessed by Flesch Reading Ease scores.

#### **Results:**

The review found that 81% of pages relating to dental health were above the reading level of an average 9-year-old. Written information on accessing dental care, including in an emergency, were the most difficult to read pages and contained inaccurate or outdated information. A report was produced with input from subject matter experts recommending content changes.

#### **Conclusion:**

Most written information relating to dental health on the NHS 111 Wales website is not understandable by a large proportion of the population. Health literacy is a social determinant of health and strategies to improve this need to address both individual ability and responsiveness of health systems. A wide range of stakeholders have a role to play in addressing health literacy.

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