How can we **improve health literacy?**

Improving health literacy empowers patients to be co-creators of their own health and can reduce health inequalities[1]

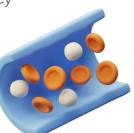**Our top 5 tips** for developing effective content

healthinote

1 Make it easy to understand

Patient Information Forum (PIF) guidance recommends aiming for a reading age of 9-11 to ensure content is inclusive.[2] Furthermore, people with high *general* literacy may not have high *health* literacy.

For this reason:
- ✓ avoid (or explain) complex medical jargon
- ✓ avoid idioms or figures of speech
- ✓ keep content short, digestible and clear

2 Involve the end-user

Involve relevant patients throughout your development process to gain **specific insights** that can shape your content, to ensure that the output is both **useful** and **appropriate** for the end-user.

3 Make it accessible, accurate, timely and appropriate

Consider your audience, age group and their capabilities.

- → Are translations required?
- → Will it be delivered at the right point in the patient pathway?
- → Does it comply with accessibility guidelines?
- → Has it been reviewed by medical professionals in the appropriate field?
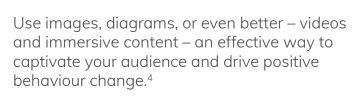
4 Make it visual

Text information can be difficult to understand, and offers limited beneficial effects on patient outcomes.[3]

Bring health topics to life, and you're more likely to see engagement and understanding.[4]

Use images, diagrams, or even better – videos and immersive content – an effective way to captivate your audience and drive positive behaviour change.[4]

"Visual aids have the ability to **transcend language and numeracy barriers** and can therefore **improve the effectiveness of communication** and **broaden target audiences**"[5]

5 Be (cautiously) optimistic

People with chronic conditions need strong support. If you want to instil positive health behaviour changes, goals need to be achievable, realistic, and delivered with optimism.

Provide users with a call to action, so those who have engaged have a channel to further reliable support.

? Not sure what terminology to use? Consult the A-Z of NHS health writing or PIF guidance on using plain language in health information.

Developed by Cognitant, May 2023. **References: 1.** GOV.UK. Local action on health inequalities: improving health literacy. September 2015; **2.** PIF. Using plain language in health information – a quick guide. Accessed May 2023; **3.** Wonggom P et al. *JBI* 2016;14(9):3-14; **4.** Ahn SJ et al. *Comput Hum Behav* 2014;39:235-45; **5.** Pratt M and Searles GE. *JCMS* 2017;21(6):497-501.