

The Missing Ingredient in Adoption

DIGITAL HEALTH LITERACY

*Why education and usability
matter more than features*



The buzz around digital health is louder than ever; AI tools, virtual consultations, patient apps, and wearables are redefining how care is delivered. But amid all this innovation, one crucial element often gets overlooked: **digital health literacy (dHL)**.

It can be defined as the ability to seek, find, understand, and appraise health information from electronic sources, and to apply that knowledge to solve health-related problems.

For instance, downloading a health app is one thing, but being able to interpret its reports, follow its recommendations, and navigate its features with ease is what truly unlocks its value.

Recognizing this, the **WHO's Regional Digital Health Action Plan 2023–2030** identifies **dHL** as a critical factor in achieving universal health coverage and ensuring that all populations benefit from digital health solutions.¹



Many digital health platforms offer impressive functionality such as symptom trackers, medication alerts, care summaries, and more.

But real success depends **not on** how much the tool offers, **but on** how intuitively and clearly people can engage with it.



CLARITY OVER COMPLEXITY

Apps that use clear, simple language, minimal steps, and visual guidance are far more likely to be adopted and used consistently especially among first-time users or less digitally savvy individuals.

However, their impact can vary due to factors such as the digital divide, age, socioeconomic status, education level, and language proficiency.



DIVERSITY IN EVERY DIRECTION

India's healthcare needs are vast and so is its linguistic and cultural diversity. With over 20 official languages and hundreds of dialects, offering fully localized digital health experiences is challenging, but increasingly necessary.

While not every app can support multiple languages right away, the experience can still be made inclusive through thoughtful design. Clean interfaces, visual cues, icon-based navigation, and simple explanations can go a long way in bridging the understanding gap.



EDUCATION IS THE REAL BRIDGE

Even the most intuitive health platform needs to provide context. Pairing digital tools with short, clear educational content like in-app prompts, infographics, videos, or easy-to-read FAQs, helps users understand their health data and take the right actions.



A MORE INFORMED TOMORROW

Digital health holds promise, but only when it meets people where they are. It must be usable before it is expansive, and educational before it is sophisticated.

In a country as diverse and dynamic as India, digital health literacy is a core requirement for meaningful adoption. The more we invest in clarity, accessibility, and patient education, the closer we come to building a health ecosystem that truly includes everyone.

REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization (WHO). Regional Digital Health Action Plan 2023-2030. Copenhagen: World Health Organization (2023)