

Barriers To Health Literacy In The Elderly

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Health literacy: defined as the degree to which individuals have the cognitive and social skills to appropriately access, understand and use health information and services to maintain good health (Panagioti et. al., 2018, p. 1258).

Low Health Literacy Associated With:

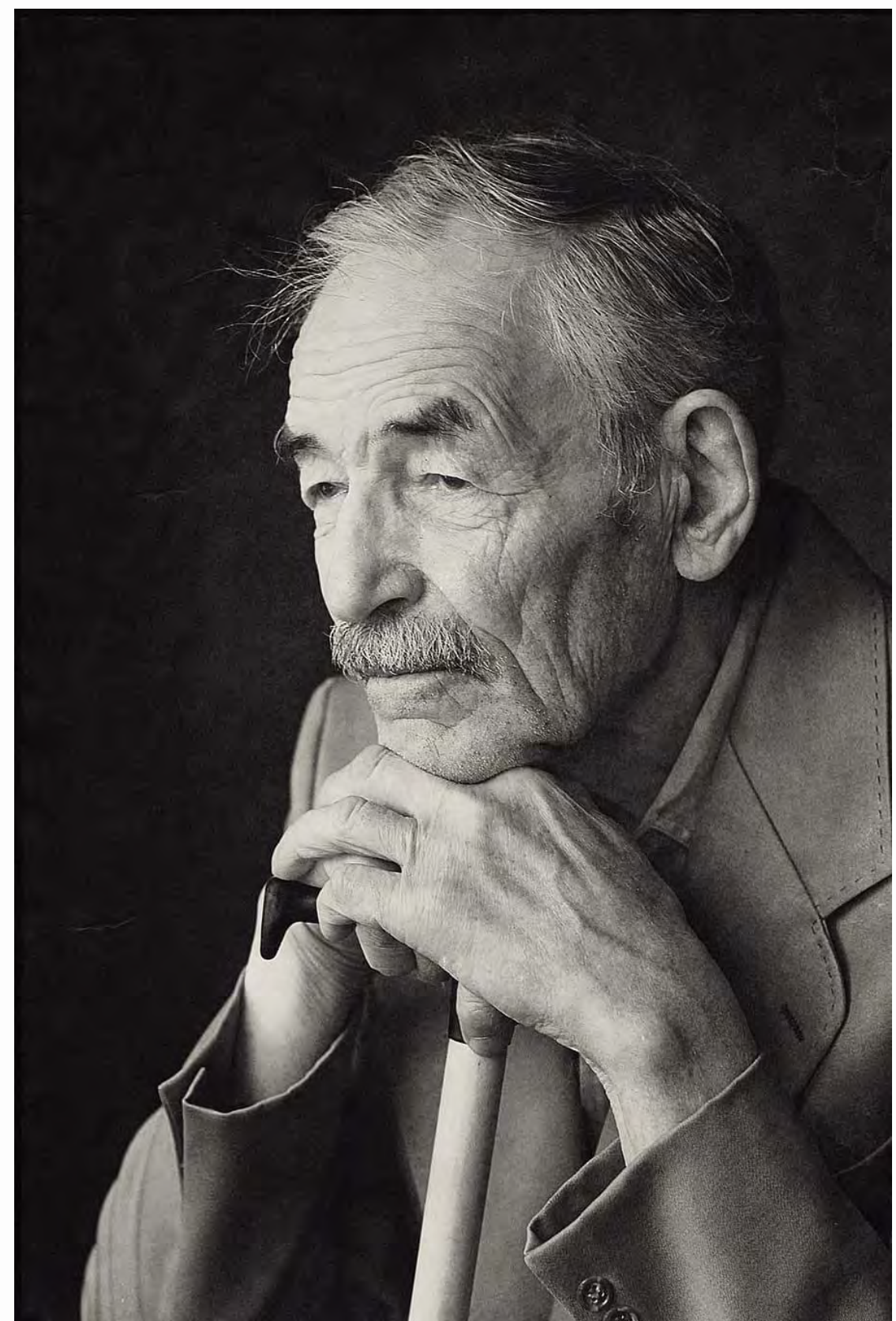
- Increased mortality
- Worse physical functioning and mental health
- Fair/poor rating of health
- Heart failure health outcomes
- Less preventative care and health promoting behaviors
- More difficulty with activities of daily living (ADLs) and activity limitations

Barriers in the Elderly:

- Cognitive ability diminishes with age
- Lack of willingness to increase health literacy
- Inability to operate new technology
- Not accessing available resources
- Ineffective nurse-patient education

Improving health literacy improves...

- Healthcare decisions
- Communication
- Compliance to treatment directions
- Health status
- Quality of life



Nursing Interventions:

- Avoid the use of medical jargon
- Repeat main points of education
- Have nurses train in verbal and nonverbal cues
- Implement the teach-back method
- Motivate patients to be involved in their health
- Provide appropriate health resources for patients to access



Why It's An Issue

59% of the elderly in the U.S. are reported to have a low health literacy (Cutilli et. al., 2018, p. 54). That's around 46 million Americans.