

Press Release

Prolepsis Institute works on improving health literacy for Older Adults: The role of new technologies and the IROHLA project guidelines to policy makers and health professionals

Athens, November 24 – The innovative initiatives taken by Prolepsis Institute to improve health literacy for older adults, and the guidelines of the project “IROHLA – Intervention Research on Health Literacy among aging Population” which has been developed due to the challenges and the particular circumstances created by the aging population in E.U. countries, were presented on Tuesday, November 24, at an informative event held at the premises of Prolepsis Institute.

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, understand and manage health information and, thus it affects significantly the well-being and health of vulnerable populations, such as the elderly. Economic status, level of education, age and sex appear among the most important factors observed in low health literacy while people with multiple and long-term health conditions, particularly over the age of 75, also have low levels of health literacy. Initiatives to improve health illiteracy are absolutely necessary in countries such as Greece where only 31.3% of people over the age of 60 have completed secondary or higher education and therefore the problem of low health literacy is prominent.

The main objective of the European project “IROHLA - Intervention Research on Health Literacy among Ageing Population” is to develop guidelines for policy and practice for a comprehensive approach improving health literacy of the aging population. The project started to run in December 2012 by 20 European science organizations, universities and Prolepsis Institute within the EU 7th Framework Program for Research (FP7) .

A pilot web platform designed by Prolepsis Institute within the IROHLA Project was presented in the informative event. The web platform has been developed with a view to improve health literacy of older people through the use of new technologies. This interactive platform which provides personalized information to the elderly is a useful innovative tool on healthy eating, physical activity and adopting a healthy lifestyle. The results of the pilot which surveyed 27 people for 3 months indicate that the participants’ knowledge on nutrition and dietary habits improved, i.e. increased breakfast consumption and daily physical activity. The National Dietary Guidelines addressed to individuals 65 years of age or older, developed by Prolepsis Institute with a significant group of scientists, was the main source of information for the electronic application.

Also presented at the event were the IROHLA policy guidelines which aim to create an evidence-based approach to health literacy in aging populations in the E.U. These policy proposals are addressed to governments, public and private organizations, as well as health professionals. The guidelines are available on the Web Portal Health Literacy Center Europe (launched in the 3rd European Health Literacy Conference which was held on November 17-19 in Brussels), which is the intended referral point for all activities promoting health literacy. The web portal <http://healthliteracycentre.eu/> is addressed to everyone interested and contains information regarding the extent of the problem, possible solutions and application scenarios and it lists the set of feasible actions that can be undertaken by policy makers.

Academics, representatives of public institutions and scientific organizations, health professionals, members of Open Care Centers for the Elderly, representatives of digital information and technology companies and of insurance companies participated in the event and discussed the challenges and prospects regarding this important current issue.

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The Prolepsis Institute is a scientific non-profit organization, active in the field of medical research, health promotion, environmental and occupational health and has contributed at the improvement of the quality of life and of the health of Greek and European citizens for the past 25 years.

More information on the IROHLA Project can be found on the following websites: <http://www.irohla.eu/home/> and <http://www.prolepsis.gr/en>

