

**WNA Dialogue Forum Topic #1**  
**Submitted by the WNA Board of Directors**

**Title:** Digital Health Literacy for the Nursing Workforce and Consumers of Health Care

**Purpose:** It is a part of WNAs continuing mission to inform and promote the development of the nursing community in the State of Wisconsin to meet the needs for competent practice and care for its citizens.

**Objectives:**

1. Identify the potential impacts of e-health/telehealth on access to quality health care for patients.
2. Outline the developmental needs of healthcare providers and consumers related to e-health or telehealth use.
3. Formulate approaches to developing increased skill sets in the provision of E-care for patients and providers across the health care spectrum.

**Outcomes:** (Action strategies will be developed and voted upon by the WNA members attending the January 21, 2022, WNA Membership Meeting.)

1. Enhance nurses' knowledge, use of digital literacy.
2. Address client/patient needs for enhanced access, use of the technology, and care management.

**Rationale for supporting this issue**

The World Health Organization has defined digital health literacy as the ability to seek, find, understand, and appraise health information from electronic sources and apply the knowledge gained to addressing or solving a health problem.<sup>1</sup> Digital Health is the field of knowledge and practice associated with the development and use of digital technologies to improve health. Digital Health encompasses digital literacy.<sup>2</sup> The need for digital technology use in health care has gradually expanded over the years as we have faced continued disparities in access to health care, decreasing numbers of family physicians, and the challenges of full practice for advanced practice nursing. Services in rural areas where there has been a lack of physician coverage, the closure of many small community hospitals and the decreasing number of family physicians in small or individualized private practice has contributed to the challenges to provide needed basic, non-emergent healthcare to continued health disparities. The need was compounded by the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic that has created new challenges for healthcare systems and required the immediate exploration, creation, and implementation of ways for clients to access not emergent or Covid related healthcare. The World Health Organization has defined digital health literacy as the ability to seek, find, understand, and appraise health information from electronic sources and apply the knowledge gained to addressing or solving a health problem.<sup>3</sup> Digital Health is the field of knowledge and practice associated with the development and use of digital technologies to improve health. Digital Health encompasses digital literacy.<sup>4</sup> The need for digital technology use in health care has gradually expanded over the years as we have faced continued disparities in access to health care, decreasing numbers of family physicians, and the challenges of full practice for advanced practice nursing. Services in rural areas where there has been a lack of physician

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<sup>1</sup> First Meeting of the WHO GCM/NCD Working Group on Health Literacy for NCDs. February, 2017. Digital Health Literacy for NCDs. <https://www.who.int/global-coordination-mechanism/activities/working-groups/17-s5-rowlands.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. 2021. Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025. Pg. 39; [9789240020924-eng \(2\).pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. 2017. First Meeting of the WHO GCM/NCD Working Group on Health Literacy for NCDs Digital Health Literacy for NCDs (Geneva, 27-28 February, 2017). [PowerPoint Presentation \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization. 2021. Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025. Pg. 39; [9789240020924-eng \(2\).pdf](#)

coverage, the closure of many small community hospitals and the decreasing number of family physicians in small or individualized private practice has contributed to the challenges to provide needed basic, non-emergent healthcare to populations with high levels of health disparities. The need was compounded by the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic that has created new challenges for healthcare systems and required the immediate exploration, creation, and implementation of ways for clients to access not emergent or Covid related healthcare.

In the Future of Nursing Report 2020-2030, the emphasis has been placed on the expansion of increased preparation of nurses to practice in the community setting with diverse populations as an effort to improve health status and address thoroughly the discrepancies that exist related to access. As a part of this effort, it has been recommended and is being adopted by major nursing bodies. Specifically, the publication notes in Conclusion 7-3: Learning experiences for students' understanding of health equity, social determinants of health, and population health and prepare them to incorporate that understanding into their professional practice (to) include opportunities to...develop such technical competencies as use of telehealth, digital health tools, and data analytics.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Report recommends that nursing education must continually prepare graduates at all levels to adapt to using innovative technologies with an emphasis on digital literacy tools.

As an activity to meet the identified needs of practicing and a developing nursing workforce, it is a major responsibility of the Wisconsin Nurses Association as a constituent of the American Nurses Association, to continually promote the skills and development of the nursing workforce in the state of Wisconsin to meet the needs of its population. Thus, digital literacy is a critical area of emphasis for this organization.

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<sup>5</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021. The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Pg.232 <https://doi.org/10.17226/25982> .