

## **ABSTRACT**

A community-based cross sectional analytic study was conducted in rural areas of Pyapon Township from September to end of November, 2015 to explore the health literacy status of 18-65 years old rural population in that area. Multi-stage random sampling method was used to select 250 participants, and face-to-face interview with standardized pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaires was done. Nearly half (49.6%) of participants were middle-aged adults. Most of them attained middle school and lower educational level, and 27.2% had odd jobs. Average monthly per capita income was just over 42,000 kyats. Generally, participants had fair exposure to health education activities and were fairly easy or very easy to pay for medication and to see the doctor. About half of participants owned radios and mobile phones. The present study pointed out that the study population had limited health literacy. The percentages of participants in inadequate, problematic and sufficient general health literacy were 76.4%, 19.6% and 4% respectively. In FHI, UHI, JHI and AHI indices, participants who had inadequate health literacy were 54.4%, 64.8%, 81.6% and 87.2% respectively. Participants scored the lowest in health promotion domain and applying health information index. There were significant associations between educational level, exposure to health education and communication activities, and general health literacy status. Moreover, there were also significant associations between behavioural risk factors as well as health status of participants, and general health literacy status. Therefore, health professionals should give more effective and valuable information to public via mobile network, work closely with education sector to include extracurricular contents of health in schools, and improve coordination and cooperation between health sector and other sectors. Further investigation is needed to develop appropriate intervention strategies to improve health literacy for better health outcomes because it is a need to look at the health literacy in the context of large systems—social systems, cultural systems, education systems and public health systems.