Abstract: Introduction: Improved population health literacy is considered as a main goal and also as a fundamental means for health promotion. Accordingly, it is expected that a significant body of research in health education and health promotion to be dedicated to health literacy issues. The purpose of this review article is to explain the concept, dimension and applications of health literacy in health education and health promotion practice, and to describe the status of researches done on this issue in Iran, as well.

Method: An internet-based literature research through Google search engine and Medline database was done, using words such as: "health literacy", "research", "health education", "health promotion" in English terminology and their equivalent in Persian language. Relevant and most reliable documents (considering some criteria such as published in scientific journals or in websites affiliated to academic and well-known health organizations were reviewed.

Result: Health literacy is defined as 'the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation ability of individuals to gain access to understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health. According to the WHO, health literacy implies the achievement of a level of knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community health by changing personal lifestyles and living conditions. It can be considered as a means to health and an indicator for monitoring and surveillance of nation's progress towards health, as well. The search results showed that just two descriptive studies were conducted in Iran. The first study, dealt with the influencing factors on health literacy in five provinces of Iran, has showed that health literacy was low in adult population; and the second study which specifically had focused on the relationship between maternal health literacy and prenatal cares and termination of delivery, showed that pregnant women had low health literacy.

Conclusion: As regard as health literacy is a main goal of health promotion and also an important factor influencing many chronic behavioral diseases and because of research gaps about health literacy in Iran, it’s suggested that health literacy subject should be placed in the topic research priorities of health education and health promotion.