FINDING GOOD QUALITY HEALTH INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Academy Library and Information Service

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1. INTRODUCTION

The internet is a fantastic resource but not everything found on it is **accurate**, **reliable** or **up to date**. Anyone can put information on it. There is no editor to check for inaccuracies or out of date information.

It is up to all of us; the internet users, patients, and health care professionals, to decide how relevant the information is and to determine the reliability of what we find.

The purpose of this presentation is to help you to find quality and trustworthy sources of health information on the internet but for more detailed training please contact the Academy Library.

2. WHO? WHAT? WHERE?

Always ask yourself:

Who: Who is the author or publisher of the site and what are their credentials? Are they fair in what they say? What are their reasons for publishing? For example, are they trying to give you information, or sell you something? Do other websites link to them?

What: What is on the site? Does the information seem accurate? Is it relevant and up to date? Do they link the **information to evidence**? Do they tell you where the information has come from?

Where: What part of the world is the website coming from? E.g. Statistics and treatment information may not be relevant to the United Kingdom.

2. WHO? WHAT? WHERE?

Always look for:

The '**About Us**' section on the site, which should explain what an organisation is, what it is for, and who sponsors or funds it.

Look at the **last updated** information date (usually at the bottom of the web page). This will tell you when the information was added. Look for references or links to the evidence.

Check the links to other information or sites. Do they work? Are they broken? Too many of these may indicate the site is no longer being maintained.

Look at the web address as this will often indicate the country of origin and type of organisation: e.g. .au = Australia .ca = Canada .com or .org = an organisation .ac = an educational site .gov = a government site

3. QUALITY STANDARDS

There are two quality standards found on health websites which are a clear indication that the information they contain should be trustworthy. Many good sites do not have these but these standards are one way for you to judge the reliability of a website.

3. QUALITY STANDARDS

1. The Information Standard

This is an independent certification programme commissioned by NHS England. It is awarded to organisations producing clear, accurate and up to date, evidenced health information. The Information Standards website has a list of all bodies it has certificated. http://www.england.nhs.uk/tis/

2. Health on the Net Foundation (HON)

HON is a non-governmental organisation, internationally known for its work in the field of health information ethics. It was founded to encourage the circulation of quality health information. Please note that the Health on the Net logo may appear on sites that are not certified. To check certification, click on the HON logo. You should be directed to a page that includes the HON code number for the site.

4. PATIENT.CO.UK

Patient.co.uk is the UK's leading independent health site, established for over 15 years. With more than 8 million visits a month, it is a trusted source of information for both patients and health professionals nationwide.

The site contains over 4,000 health information leaflets, a wellbeing centre, a free health check, and thousands of discussion forums. It is accredited by The Information Standard and HON.

http://www.patient.co.uk/

5. NHS.UK

This site is funded by the Department of Health. It is committed to providing trustworthy information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare. NHS Choices ensures its content is evidence based and includes the best scientific knowledge available on medical conditions, healthcare, treatments, plus local services and Healthy living. It is accredited by The Information Standard.

http://www.nhs.uk/

6. BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Each day the NHS Choices team select health stories that are making the latest news headlines on TV, radio, newspapers, and the web. These are sent to Bazian, a leading provider of evidence based healthcare information. Bazian's clinicians and scientists analyse the research and produce evidence based assessments that are edited and published by NHS Choices.

https://www.nhs.uk/news/

7. TIPS FOR SEARCHING FOR HEALTH INFO

Don't take the information you read on one site at face value. Check with another one to see if it says the same thing. Get a second opinion.

Don't just rely on the information you read online. Talk to your doctor about what you've read, and ask questions.

Stay safe when searching online, and protect your privacy.

Further reading:

MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing
https://medlineplus.gov/healthywebsurfing.html

Improving Your Health Online
https://www.learnmyway.com/subjects/improving-your-health-online/

FURTHER HELP

If you would like to know more about searching for online health information, please contact the Academy Library.

We provide:
- A library catalogue with access to collections around the South West
- Local, regional, and national health care databases (with access to e-books and journals)
- Database training for individuals and groups, plus bespoke training on finding information
- Literature searching and current awareness services

Email gwh.alis@nhs.net

Phone x4593 / x4721 / x4596

Online http://intranet/services/departments-l/library/