

THE FACTS

- Research has shown that 2 out of 5 patients with chronic pain search the Internet for information on their pain condition.¹
- Many of these people put more trust in websites than in their own physician,² and make treatment choices based on this information.³

These numbers are concerning because...

- Most of us accept such information at face value and do not question information found online.⁴
- Numerous expert research groups have found that the vast majority of websites about pain conditions are of poor quality. In particular, many websites...
 - provide information that is unsupported by scientific research.
 - are not relevant to the information being searched for.
 - are designed to make money for the owner of the website.

¹ Corcoran, T. B., Haigh, F., Seabrook, A., & Schug, S. (2009). The quality of Internet-sourced information for patients with chronic pain is poor. *Clinical Journal of Pain*, 25, 617-623.

² Diaz, J. A., Griffith, R. A., Ng, J. J., Reinert, S. E., Friedmann, P. D., & Moulton, A. W. (2002). Patients' use of the Internet for medical information. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 17, 180-185.

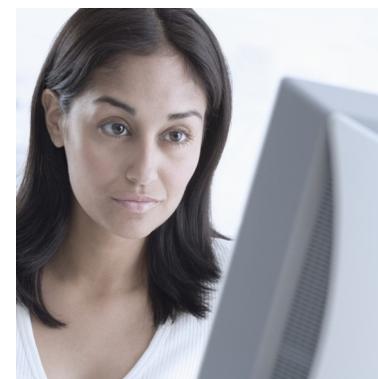
³ de Boer, M. J., Versteegen, G. J., & van Wijhe, M. (2007). Patients' use of the Internet for pain-related medical information. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 68, 86-97.

⁴ Anderson, J. G., Rainey, M. R., & Eysenbach, G. (2003). The impact of CyberHealthcare on the physician-patient relationship. *Journal of Medical Systems*, 27, 67-84.



The creation of this pamphlet was supported by...

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PAIN ONLINE



Contents

Facts about online information
Determining quality of pain sites
10 of the best quality pain websites
Warning signs of poor quality sites

10 OF THE BEST QUALITY PAIN WEBSITES

1. www.cigna.com/healthinfo/tv2262.html
 - pelvic pain; causes; diagnosis; treatment; prevention
2. adam.about.net/reports/Migraine-headaches.htm
 - migraine types; causes; prognosis; triggers; treatment
3. www.webmd.com/pain-management/default.htm
 - pain conditions; diagnosis; treatment; management
4. www.aolhealth.com/condition-center/arthritis
 - arthritis; diagnosis; self-management
5. www.painfoundation.org
 - general pain; decision-making & caregiver guides
6. arthritis.about.com/
 - symptoms; diagnosis; treatment; management
7. www.canadianpaincoalition.ca/
 - conditions; living with pain; treatment; self-care
8. www.emedicinehealth.com/chronic_pain/article_em.htm
 - conditions; treatment; related topics and diseases
9. www.aolhealth.com/condition-center/back-pain
 - diagnosis; prevention; treatment; self-management
10. www.fibromyalgia-symptoms.org/
 - symptoms; diagnosis; treatment; self-care



Note: These websites were rated highly using the DISCERN and were active as of February 15, 2012.

Determining website information quality

Below are a list of questions to ask yourself as you browse the web for information about your condition or concern.



Does the website...

- ✓ clearly state its purpose?
- ✓ contain information relevant to your condition/concerns?
- ✓ contain realistic and appropriate treatment options?
- ✓ back up information with references to other sources ?
 - *Hint: Does it have a reference list or bibliography?
- ✓ clearly state when it was produced and updated?
- ✓ provide objective and unbiased information?
 - *Hint: Be wary of sites selling products or services.
- ✓ provide links to other websites with further information?
- ✓ describe how each treatment option works?
- ✓ describe the benefits and risks of each treatment option?
- ✓ explain how each treatment will impact quality of life?
- ✓ emphasize that there is more than one treatment option?
- ✓ identify the benefits and risks of not seeking treatment?
- ✓ suggest questions to ask your health care provider?

*The information contained in this pamphlet is based on the DISCERN health information evaluation tool, a brief questionnaire designed to provide users with a reliable way of assessing the quality of written health information. The DISCERN questionnaire is available for FREE at <http://www.discern.org.uk/index.php>. Please see the website for more information on this useful tool.

Warning Signs of Poor Quality Websites

Be wary if:

- ✗ the website is attempting to sell a specific product or treatment.
- ✗ the treatment recommendations are based largely on personal testimonials or success stories from one or more users. High quality websites usually support their information with scientific evidence.
- ✗ the website tries to gain your attention by using emotional, unbelievable, or alarmist claims, rather than objective information. If the claims sound too good to be true, they probably are. NEVER consider such options without discussing with a qualified health care professional first.
- ✗ the information comes from only one source, or no reference list is provided.



Warning

*Please be advised that information on the suggested websites is intended for educational purposes only and should never be a replacement for the advice of your family physician. **If you have or think you may have a medical condition, you should consult a health care professional**, who can properly diagnose and treat the problem. **Never ignore the advice of a physician because of something you have read on these or any other websites.** Always consult with a qualified health care provider before considering any treatment, diet, or program found online.