Stanford Health Library
Finding Credible Information to Make Critical Health Care Decisions

Consumer Health Information

- Internet has revolutionized access to information and we have grown accustomed to getting instant answers. While this is great for many areas in our lives, there are limitations and potentially harmful ramifications of instant answers for health-related questions.

- 2012 Pew Research report found that 72% of internet users looked for health information online within the previous year. (Fox,S, Duggan M. Health Online 2013. *Pew Research Internet Project*. 13 Jan. 2013.)

- Health searches yield hundreds of thousands or even millions of results. Credible information is out there, but so are sites which offer unproven treatments, anecdotal evidence, outdated information, or come from commercial interests.

- People use the information they find online to make critical healthcare decisions. It's important to use evidence-based, credible, current resources.

With so many sites, how can you tell if a resource you have located contains information you can trust?

There are some credentials websites obtain to let consumers know their information has met certain criteria.

HON (Health on the Net)
The Health On the Net Foundation (HON) promotes and guides the deployment of useful and reliable online health information, and its appropriate and efficient use. Created in 1995, HON is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, accredited to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Authority
Give qualifications of authors

Justifiability
Justification of claims / balanced and objective claims

Complementarity
Information to support, not replace

Transparency
Accessibility, provide valid contact information

Confidentiality
Respect the privacy of site users

Financial disclosure
Provide details of funding

Attribution
Cite the sources and dates of medical Information

Advertising
Clearly distinguish advertising from editorial content

Not every website has HON or other certification.
How do you evaluate?

- **Who runs this website? Who pays for it? Who are the sponsors?**
    - *.edu* means that the source of the information is part of an educational system (such as a college or university)
    - *.org* usually means that the source is a non-profit organization
    - *.gov* means that the source is a part of a national or state government
    - *.com* or *.biz* usually means the site is run by a commercial (for-profit) or private source

- **What's the purpose or mission of this website?**

- **Who is the intended audience?**

- **What is the source of the information on this website? How is it documented?**

- **How is the information reviewed? Who writes or reviews it?**

- **How up-to-date is the information?**

Cancer Information on the Internet. American Cancer Society. Retrieved from:
http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancerbasics/cancer-information-on-the-internet

Stanford | MEDICINE

Use Information Wisely

It can be hard to judge the accuracy and credibility of medical information you read in books or magazines, see on television, or find on the Internet. Even people with medical backgrounds sometimes find this task challenging. Following are some important tips to help you decide what information is believable and accurate on the Internet.

The Internet

- Compare the information you find on the Internet with other resources. Check two or three articles in the medical literature or medical textbooks to see whether the information or advice is similar.

- Check the author's or organization's credentials. They should be clearly displayed on the Web site. If the credentials are missing, consider this a red flag. Unfortunately, there are many phony doctors and other health professionals making false claims on the Internet.

Guide for Credible Internet Information. *Society for Integrative Oncology.* Retrieved from
http://www.integrativeonc.org/index.php/patients/131-guide-for-credible-internet-information?showall=1

Consumer Health Information

- Where can consumers go to find medical literature to verify the information they have located?

- We're here to help!

Stanford Health Library - Who We Are

- Community benefit of Stanford Health Care.

- Four branches.

- Each branch is managed by a librarian who has a Master's degree in Library Science.

- Services and resources are free and open to anyone, anywhere.

- You do not need to be receiving care at Stanford.

Our Role Within Your Team

- Support you throughout your care – new diagnosis, active treatment, survivorship.

- We can help you find the credible information to help you make your health care decisions.

- Provide customized searches based on your specific healthcare needs.
    - Disease-specific.

    - Coping, caregiving, nutrition, exercise, mindfulness.

    - Complementary and alternative medicine.

    - Communicating with your team.

- We do not interpret articles or offer advice.

- We encourage you to take the information back to your healthcare team.

The Resources We Use

- Comprehensive resources not available on the free internet – different information than you find through search engines such as Google and Bing.

- Information is evidence-based, authoritative, and current.

- Layman's terms and professional-level.

- Information in different languages.

- Resources in various formats:

    - E-books you can access from your home computer or mobile device.

    - Print materials that you can borrow.

    - Videos available either online through library website or DVDs you can borrow.

Contact Us

- Visit one of our branches.

- Call or email to request information:

    - (650)736-1960

    - gkumagai@stanfordhealthcare.org