

Can We Trust Medical Information Online?

Written by Dr. Manshadi M.D.
Wednesday, 04 June 2014 17:50



Health websites can be a source of valuable health information. Let's look deeper beyond the obvious:

- Should we believe and trust everything that we read on health websites?
- How do we know what we read is truly accurate? Are there a hidden agenda within an article?
- Could the article overly emphasize one aspect of health finding to promote its own product?
- How can we be a smart reader to get the most out of our health articles found on the Internet?

These are some thoughts that came across my mind after I had a patient (that I recently saw in my office) who showed me a printout of an article he had read from the Internet. He wanted me to change his medical regimen. This proves how vulnerable the public is because some people can truly believe everything they read.

Let us examine and have some guidelines as to what to believe and what not to pay attention to when we do our Internet search on the web.

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First, the article could be from a reliable source, but what needs to be checked is as to when the article was written. Medical research is at its fluid state. It is not like gross anatomy where the human structures and organs are fixed in one location. Medical knowledge and our understanding of a medical topic can be quite relevant today, but a new finding from a different research that comes up a month later could totally discount the original thought. It would be wise to look at the time frame in which the article was penned.

Second, be inquisitive about the source of the article. Look at the "About us" section of the website to see which organization is responsible for the article. Once you find this out, then the second part to this is to know if that particular source is a respectable one. In general, there are two main topics people may utilize for health help. Cardiovascular health and Cancer treatments are the most important topics. These health issues are ranked as the leading causes of mortality in North America. For Cardiovascular help, the best website would be ACC (*American College of Cardiology*) and AHA (*American Heart Association*) websites.

For ACC the website is www.Cardisource.org and for AHA it is www.heart.org. These sites are fully professional and backed by science and top doctors. Both of these have journals that print the latest and the best research on cardiovascular health and disease. They tend to both medical professionals and the general public. Next, Top tier university hospitals websites are also a good source. There may be some minor conflict to attract patients to their centers, but they would not compromise their integrity in front of advertisements. If the articles are not written by some reputable organizations, then it might be by one expert. To see if this person is an expert, one needs to check his associations with the Universities and medical Societies. If he has backing from these organizations, then they are a good source of information.

U.S. government health related information is also reliable. A good example is www.medlineplus.gov. It provides information on several hundred diseases and conditions. For cancer information, the website for American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org), National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov), and www.Cancercare.org would be trustworthy resources.

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For some other common health conditions such as Diabetes and Alzheimer disease, the websites to browse are American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.Org), or the National Diabetes Education program (www.ndep.nih.gov), and Alzheimer's Association (www.alz.org).

Probably the most reliable source would be your trusted physician. One needs to do their due diligence in picking their doctor. Once this is done, one must print the information and bring it to their doctor's attention. The bond that exists between the competent physician and the patient along with proper information from the Internet can help make the appropriate decisions in diagnosing and treating our health issues.

To summarize, patients need to be inquisitive and take an active role in improving their health. One source of information is the Internet. One must follow these rules: make sure the information is not anonymous, the information is not biased where there is an internal conflict, the content is current, and most importantly if the information is too good to be true such as promising a miracle cure, then it is most likely not a reliable source.

Dr. Manshadi MD, FACC, FSCAI, FAHA, FACP is among the top American cardiologists. He is the author of *The Wisdom of Heart Health*. The physician is an Interventional Cardiologist who treats patients from prevention to intervention. He is a CMA (California Medical Association) member since 2001. He is a Board-Certified physician with the American Board of Interventional Cardiology, American Board of Cardiology. He combines private practice with Academic Medicine. Presently, he serves as Associate Clinical Professor at UC Davis Medical Center and as Clinical Professor at University of the Pacific among other positions. In addition, he is the Chair of Media Relations for American College of Cardiology, California Chapter. The multi-faceted physician is licensed and certified in nuclear medicine, a subspecialty of radiology. In this regard, he is a member of

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the American Board of Nuclear Cardiology. It is noteworthy to mention that in his practice, he likes to use innovative tests. If you want to know more about Dr. Manshadi, you can click here.

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