

1: Health On the Net Foundation: MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL

The Internet has revolutionized the way information is shared and accessed. Information retrieval is easier now than ever before. Since the rise of modern search engines, social networks, and ubiquitous access through devices such as smartphones and tablet or laptop computers, information is.

They can use it to research school reports, communicate with teachers and other kids, and play interactive games. But online access also comes with risks, like inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and online predators. Using apps and websites where kids interact, predators may pose as a child or teen looking to make a new friend. They might prod the child to exchange personal information, such as address and phone number, or encourage kids to call them, seeing their phone number via caller ID. Parents should be aware of what their kids see and hear on the Internet, who they meet, and what they share about themselves. Talk with your kids, use tools to protect them, and keep an eye on their activities. The law also prohibits a site from requiring a child to provide more personal information than necessary to play a game or enter a contest. Many Internet service providers ISPs provide parent-control options. You can also get software that helps block access to sites and restricts personal information from being sent online. Other programs can monitor and track online activity. Basic guidelines to share with your kids for safe online use: Follow the family rules, and those set by the Internet service provider. Never post or trade personal pictures. Never reveal personal information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location. Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text. Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary or hurtful. Basic guidelines for parental supervision: Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior. Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets. Check your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges. Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the FBI if your child has received child pornography via the Internet. Watch for warning signs of a child being targeted by an online predator. Keep an open line of communication and make sure that they feel comfortable turning to you when they have problems online. The Internet and Teens As kids get older, it gets a little trickier to monitor their time spent online. They may carry a smartphone with them at all times. They probably want some privacy. The Internet can provide a safe "virtual" environment for exploring some newfound freedom if precautions are taken. Talk about the sites and apps teens use and their online experiences. Explain that passwords are there to protect against things like identity theft. They should never share them with anyone, even a boyfriend, girlfriend, or best friend.

2: The Internet and Health | Pew Research Center

Health On the Net's main mission is to promote transparent and reliable health / medical information online, for a safe use of the Internet. Health On the Net, promotes transparent and reliable health information online through HONcode certification.

Internet use may harm teen health Scientists find that heavy Internet use puts teens at risk of high blood pressure Alison Pearce Stevens Oct 22, 2017: But spending too much time on the Internet could lead to health problems, a new study reports. Heavy Internet use appears able to put teens at serious risk of high blood pressure, it finds. As the term suggests, high blood pressure exerts extra outward pressure on vessel walls. With exercise, blood pressure increases. At rest, that pressure should return to a relatively low, background level. But in some people, it remains relatively elevated, even at rest. High blood pressure in children and teens often continues into adulthood, says Andrea Cassidy-Bushrow, who led the new study. Persistent high blood pressure can trigger serious health problems, from kidney disease and memory loss to eye damage and heart disease or stroke. As an epidemiologist, she investigates causes of illness. Obesity and diets high in salt are among factors known to boost blood pressure. But researchers worry that other, less obvious, factors also may play a role. Previous studies had linked screen time — watching television or playing on a computer — and high blood pressure. Teens on screens get less exercise, Cassidy-Bushrow says. But Internet use also has been linked to depression and obesity. What might make Internet use more dangerous? With cell phones and other mobile devices, the Internet can be as close as the touch of a button for most tweens and teens. Frequent Internet use has been linked to anxiety, addiction and social isolation. All of these are associated with high blood pressure in adults. So the researchers recruited adolescents, aged 14 to 17, to study whether Internet use might influence blood pressure in teens. BMI is one way to look at whether somebody is over- or underweight. The teens also answered questions about how much time they spend on the Internet. This included both the number of hours per day as well as the number of days per week. Nearly all of the teens had used the Internet during the week before their lab visit. Most reported accessing the Internet both at home and at school. Most also reported moderate to heavy Internet use. The researchers defined heavy use as two or more hours each and every day. Moderate use involved less than two hours a day on five to seven days a week. Light users accessed the internet for less than two hours a day and on no more than four days a week. Four out of 10 teens used the Internet more than two hours every day. Nineteen percent of these heavy users had high blood pressure. Another four in ten teens reported moderate use. These teens had moderately high blood pressure. The findings appear in the October Journal of School Nursing. She is a psychologist at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. But, she points out, the study has a major limitation: The researchers measured blood pressure only once for each teen. Cassidy-Bushrow agrees that more research needs to be done. However, she adds, single blood-pressure readings have been used in other studies. For now, she recommends that school nurses screen students for high blood pressure and moderate to heavy Internet use. Education and training for teens, teachers and parents also could help ensure that teens find a healthy balance in their online life, she says. That could go a long way in helping protect the health of people growing up in this digital age. It results from an illness triggered by brain changes that occur after using some drugs or engaging in some extremely pleasurable activities. People with an addiction will feel a compelling need to use a drug which can be alcohol, the nicotine in tobacco, a prescription drug or an illegal chemical such as cocaine or heroin , even when the user knows that doing so risks severe health or legal consequences. People with anxiety may even develop panic attacks. BMI can be used to measure if someone is overweight or obese. However, because BMI does not account for how much muscle or fat a person has, it is not an accurate measure. They can include teasing, spreading rumors about someone, saying hurtful things to someone and intentionally leaving someone out of groups or activities. Sometimes bullying can include attacks using violence such as hitting , threats of violence, yelling at someone or abusing someone with violent language. Much bullying takes place in person. But it also may occur online, through emails or via text messages. Newer examples including making fake profiles of people on websites or posting embarrassing photos or videos on social media. People

suffering from depression often feel they lack the energy needed to get anything done. They may have difficulty concentrating on things or showing an interest in normal events. Many times, these feelings seem to be triggered by nothing; they can appear out of nowhere. It puts a strain on blood vessels and the heart. Obesity is associated with a wide range of health problems, including type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. Scientists and mental-health professionals who work in this field are known as psychologists. Relating to gatherings of people; a term for animals or people that prefer to exist in groups. Tween is a term usually used for to years olds.

3: Internet Health Test: the Open Broadband Speed Test

Get involved by reading our latest blog posts on Internet privacy, listen to the IRL Podcast and subscribe to our newsletter.

Regulation[edit] In the United States the Food and Drug Administration offers guidance for health industry organizations which share information online. Journal of Medical Internet Research. Legal liability, patient-data overload among issues making physicians uneasy over emergence of personal health records". Patient and Public Relationships: Annals of Internal Medicine. Journal of Biomedical Informatics. Yearbook of Medical Informatics. Benefits, Risks, and Best Practices". Establish social media guidelines to protect health information, and reputation of practice and physicians". Medical Journal of Babylon. Retrieved 25 July New England Journal of Medicine. American Journal of Health Behavior. Archives of Internal Medicine. Complementary Therapies in Medicine. Computers in Human Behavior. The Journal of the American Medical Association. The Australasian Medical Journal. A review of theory-driven models of trust in the online health context. IFLA Journal, 42 3: W; Overhage, J M. Z 1 March Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association. Retrieved 31 March Engaging patients through social media Is healthcare ready for empowered and digitally demanding patients? Retrieved 22 January

4: Internet use may harm teen health | Science News for Students

For our September health survey, we explored how U.S. adults are using the internet and digital technology as tools related to health and healthcare. Among our findings: 81% of U.S. adults use the internet and 59% say they have looked online for health information in the past year. 35% of U.S.

When we asked respondents about the accuracy of their initial diagnosis, they reported: Women are more likely than men to go online to figure out a possible diagnosis. Historically, people have always tried to answer their health questions at home and made personal choices about whether and when to consult a clinician. Many have now added the internet to their personal health toolbox, helping themselves and their loved ones better understand what might be ailing them. This study was not designed to determine whether the internet has had a good or bad influence on health care. It measures the scope, but not the outcome, of this activity. The vast majority of this care and conversation took place offline, but a small group of people did communicate with each of these sources online. And, since a majority of adults consult the internet when they have health questions, these communications with clinicians, family, and fellow patients joined the stream of information flowing in. This includes searches related to serious conditions, general information searches, and searches for minor health problems. One in four people seeking health information online have hit a pay wall. Twenty-six percent of internet users who look online for health information say they have been asked to pay for access to something they wanted to see online. Thirteen percent of those who hit a pay wall say they just gave up. The social life of health information is a low-key but steady presence in American life. In past surveys, the Pew Internet Project has not defined a time period for health activities online. We find once again that there is a social life of health information, as well as peer-to-peer support, as people exchange stories about their own health issues to help each other understand what might lie ahead: Health-related reviews and rankings continue to be used by only a modest group of consumers. About one in five internet users have consulted online reviews of particular drugs or medical treatments, doctors or other providers, and hospitals or medical facilities. About this study The results reported here come from a nationwide survey of 3, adults living in the United States. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline 1, and cell phone 1, including without a landline phone. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The Project is nonpartisan and takes no position on policy issues. Support for the Project is provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Support for this study was provided by the California HealthCare Foundation, an independent philanthropy committed to improving the way health care is delivered and financed in California.

5: NPR Choice page

The nature and quality of online health-related information seeking on the web is challenging and complex and many researchers investigated this issue benefiting from a wide range of theories from different disciplines. Among all sources there is a wide variance in quality of health information on the Internet.

Health Information on the Web: But it is especially true for health-related information you find on the World Wide Web. The Web can be a great resource. There are millions of websites that offer health-related information. You can learn about a specific disease or health condition. You can also find tips on staying healthy. But among these websites, many present myths and half-truths as if they are facts. Where did this information come from? Any website that provides health-related information should say where it got the information. See if you can find answers to the following questions: Who wrote this information? Many health-related websites post information that comes from other sources. If this is the case, the original source should be clearly stated. Some information contains numbers and statistics. Is the source of the numbers listed? Is it a reliable source? If so, is the opinion from a qualified person or group? This could include a doctor or medical organization. How current is this information? Health information is constantly changing. Researchers learn new things about diseases and their treatments all the time. Good health-related information should be up-to-date. Many webpages will post the date when the page was last reviewed or updated. You can usually find this date at the very bottom of the page. This tells you when the information was originally written. Look for pages that have been reviewed in the past 1 to 2 years. Who is responsible for the content of the website? Before believing what you read, find out who is responsible for information on the website. Is it an organization, a company, or an individual person? This can make a difference in how reliable the information is. Websites published by an organization Health-related websites may be published by different organizations: These could include drug or insurance companies. However, you still need to find out where these sites get their information. Websites published by a company Sites with. They may be published by a company that uses the web to sell products or services. These are called commercial sites. Commercial sites can offer useful and accurate information. But be careful about believing all the information you read on these sites. The company that pays for the site could have something to gain from it. The information may not be fair and accurate. Websites published by an individual Websites published by individuals may offer support and advice. They can help you cope with certain conditions and their treatments. They can contain reliable and useful information. Many of them do contain good information. But some may contain myths, rumors, or misinformation. Clicking on this link will usually take you to a new page. This page explains who is responsible for the information on the site. Your doctor is the best person to answer questions about your personal health. Questions to ask your doctor Can you give me good resources to look up information on the web? Which kinds of websites provide the most reliable information? Are there any websites I should avoid? Should I call if I read something on a reliable health-related website that could affect me?

6: Health information on the Internet - Wikipedia

"The worst health advice I've seen on the Internet, and no doubt you've heard this elsewhere as well, is to 'never go to bed angry,'" says therapist Raffi Bilek, LCSW-C, director of.

Advanced Search Abstract Disseminating health and medical information on the Internet can improve knowledge transfer from health professionals to the population, and help individuals to maintain and improve their health. There are currently several medical information websites that directly target the general population with the aim of providing information about health problems, self-care and prevention. However, this new technology also hides several shortcomings, such as: To be able to overcome these dangers, it is important that public health practitioners and health professionals be involved in the design, dissemination and evaluation of Web-based health and medical information. This transfer will help individuals to maintain and improve their health, and will reduce the gap between health professionals and the population in terms of power and communication. Recent studies show that in Canada and the United States, more than half of the population has access to the Internet, and the majority of Internet users seek health information Dickinson and Ellison, ; Pew Internet and American Life Project, The three main ways of accessing online health information are: Health information is more and more available on Internet, with the continuous growing of medical information websites. While many of them are intended for health professionals, more and more websites directly address the population with a view to providing information about health problems, self-care and prevention. Moreover, online health support groups, which provide social support and information, offer participants h availability, anonymity and exposure to an increased number of opinions and expertise Cline and Haynes, One also finds interactive applications on the Internet, such as programs for physical activities or smoking cessation American Heart Association, With these programs, it is possible to support participants by e-mail, track their progress with online personal activity calendars, and create virtual support groups where participants can interact. There are also experimental interactive modules for managing chronic diseases; patients, along with professionals, will be able to track and treat their disease, and prevent complications. There will also be the Internet-based medical record, accessible to the patients via their computers. With this record, health professionals will be able to transmit targeted information to their patients and vice versa. For example, it will be possible to integrate a list of healthy recipes into the record of diabetics to help them change their diet. Also, individuals will be able to record their glucose level, such that it will be available at all times for the physician Jadad, This new era of health information technology thus has the potential for providing users with health information specific to their needs and characteristics Robinson et al. These new technologies also have shortcomings, however, which receive less attention and could hinder the above-mentioned potential. At present, it is impossible to assess the magnitude of this problem because studies on the subject are not consistent with one another. While some authors consider that the quality of medical information on the Internet is poor Doupi and Van der Lei, ; Latthe et al. These contradictory results are not surprising when we consider the large number and variety of sources for medical information on the Internet. Because of this problem, criteria for evaluating Internet health information quality have been developed by several organizations Eysenbach et al. These criteria take into account not only website content quality, reliability, accuracy, scope, etc. Until now, however, the impact of these criteria on the design and the use of health information websites has been relatively weak because they are subject to the good will of website designers, and also because users are unaware of them. While the proportion of the population using the Internet is growing strongly, and although more than half of all Canadians have access to this medium, access is not the same for all Dickinson and Ellison, One finds the same phenomenon in the US, where even though the majority of the population use the Internet, some subgroups such as black populations with low incomes have almost no access to this new medium Brodie et al. Thus, it is the poorest and the elderly, i. The risk here is that even more medical and health knowledge is concentrated in the hands of the richest, thereby increasing social disparities in health Eng et al. However, one could argue that with time, Internet access will spread to the whole of society, as was the case with television. Moreover, there are several private or government

initiatives intended to help households to buy computers and to supply Internet access schools, libraries and subsidies to connect families in Quebec. However, universal access to the Internet will not eliminate disparities in the use of available health and medical information Morris et al. Access is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. In fact, the most important barriers to the use of health and medical information on the Internet are the difficulties in finding it and, for a large part of the population, in understanding and using it properly. However, there are very few tools to help people find relevant information in this mountain. For example, the scientific quality of information is difficult to evaluate by the public Shepperd et al. The few studies on the subject show that this is not always the case. Furthermore, while available information is often valid, in many cases it is incomplete. This lack can negatively influence user decisions. For example, lack of information about alternative treatments prevents users from making an enlightened choice. Moreover, locating accurate health information may also be difficult because of lack of user-friendliness and lack of permanence sites disappear and change without warning Cline and Haynes, At present, most medical information websites present technical information to a population unfamiliar with medical literature. In addition, the difficulty with technical terms and the required reading skill level is also a problem. These people, who are also those with little or no access to the Internet the poor, the elderly, etc. But even with Internet users, it is likely that some of them have difficulties reading and understanding medical information displayed on this medium. Unfortunately, there is no information on the magnitude of this problem. Besides the fact that information can be incomplete or based on insufficient scientific evidence, one can also find false or misleading information, particularly in regard to online support groups, where sensational anecdotes and unbalanced views are common Pereira and Bruera, For consumers who interpret information incorrectly or try inappropriate treatments, this could lead to a health hazard. Another problem with the Internet is that it is now possible for pharmaceutical companies to promote their products directly and at very lost cost to consumers. Products can be promoted directly on company websites, in partnership with medical information websites, or by means of advertisement banners on other websites. These new ways of disseminating medical information carry important risks of conflict of interest and over-consumption of medication Meyers, Indeed, it is difficult for Internet users to distinguish between material promoting drugs and non-promotional information about health problems and their treatment. Furthermore, although the knowledge of various therapeutic alternatives allows patients to be better informed and to make enlightened choices, it can also lead them to press health professionals to prescribe useless medication. Finally, it is now possible to make more-or-less legal online purchases of drugs e. In light of the above, the danger from a public health perspective is that the Internet could lead to an increase in the use of health services and drugs without engendering a positive impact on care quality, disease prevention or health promotion. CONCLUSION For educated people who know how to find useful information on the Internet regarding self-care and disease prevention, and who also know how to deal with the health care system, the Internet holds great promise. Studies show that most Internet users are satisfied with the information they found and half of those seeking health information reported that their findings influenced treatment decisions Pew Internet and American Life Project, a. But for the rest of the population, including the less educated, the elderly and those with many health problems, Internet promises will come true only if health information is designed according to their needs and capacities. First, it will be necessary to facilitate Internet use by supporting access in homes and public places public libraries, schools, etc. It will also be necessary to develop new support services, such as the Internet on the television WebTV or Web-specific terminals that are simpler to use. It would be also interesting to combine the Internet with other media, such as NHS Direct from the National Health Service in Great Britain, which provides health information available both on the Internet and by telephone National Health Service, Secondly, much work needs to be done in the area of organizing health and medical information so that it is easier to find, relevant, and ready to be used, even for people with a low level of health literacy. New information technologies can provide more visual and interactive learning opportunities than pamphlets and older forms of health instructions Kickbusch, To do so, medical information websites must be developed in partnership with lay people, especially those in need of health information. It is important to learn how people use the Internet, what information they need, and how this information must be organized and presented so that they can use it

adequately to maintain and improve their health. Thirdly, public health practitioners and health professionals must be integrated into the process of diffusing medical information on the Internet. Not only can they guarantee the quality of information, but they can also create a link between this information and their patients. They could, for example, suggest medical information to their patients by directing them to relevant websites in particular via the computerized medical file, accessible to patients by the Internet and containing links to targeted medical information. For public health, the challenge will be to facilitate health-promoting use of the Web among consumers in conjunction with their health care providers Cline and Haynes, It will be particularly important to find incentives to include under-served individuals in the use of the Internet for medical information, because this population is the one that needs the most health information and that is the least attracted by these new technologies. Finally, the major challenge in the coming years will be to measure the impact of the Internet, as a source for medical information, on health beliefs and behaviors, health care services, and population health to determine the extent to which the promise held by this new medium is fulfilled. Mike Benigeri holds a post-doctoral fellowship, and Pierre Pluye holds a doctoral scholarship. Hazards of public health.

7: Health Online | Pew Research Center

Health sites on the Internet have an abundance of general health information, including, amongst other things, information on specific health topics, 'read more' functions, advice for staying healthy, information about health risks and dangers, interactive tests, and online doctors.

Advanced Search Abstract The aim of this article is to discuss the implications of health on the Internet for health promotion, focusing in particular on the concept of empowerment. Empowering aspects of health on the Internet include the enabling of advanced information and knowledge retrieval, anonymity and convenience in accessing information, creation of social contacts and support independent of time and space, and challenging the expert-lay actor relationship. Introduction Interest in the Internet as a tool for health-related information and communication has grown immensely in recent years. Most commentators seem to adopt a positive, or even Utopian, perspective, focusing on the future possibilities that information technology can offer in the fields of health care and health promotion [e. Bernhardt and Hubley, ; Eysenbach and Jadad,]. Some have called the impact of information technology a paradigm shift [e. Kahn, ; Chin,], others refer to a revolution Fox and Rainie, ; Bernhardt and Hubley, However, warnings have also been raised, concerning primarily the quality of the information available on the Internet. These concerns have led to concerted efforts to assess the quality of e-health information and to create quality standards for Internet health sites [e. Still, the main argument is that the Internet is a valuable tool for health care and health promotion, and that the initial problems that have been encountered will, in due course, be both properly addressed and resolved. From such a perspective, health on the Internet is fundamentally a good thing. However, this is a contestable assumption; health on the Internet is a fact but, rather than simply and unproblematically taking its value in a health promotion context for granted, its implications need to be thoroughly analyzed. This discussion is based on a review of research in the area of health on the Internet e-health. A number of recurring themes in the debate on health on the Internet will be presented and analyzed in relation to the concept of empowerment. In an earlier review of the accessing of health information on the Internet, Cline and Haynes Cline and Haynes, found both benefits and pitfalls associated with health advice on the Internet. They found that widespread access to health information, interactivity, information tailoring and anonymity were all obvious benefits. Conversely, inequity in access, navigational challenges, poor quality of online health information and poorly developed navigational skills among consumers were found to detract from the value of the Internet as a health promotional tool. The authors also stress the lack of empirical research on health information and the Internet. Tones, ; Rootman et al. Chin, ; Eysenbach, ; Metcalf et al. The basis of the common definition of empowerment within health promotion is derived from the Ottawa Charter [WHO , p. It could, therefore, be argued that one important common denominator is the ambition to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the lay actor. This could, in turn, be said to entail an increase in power for the lay actor. This argument rests on the idea that the fundamental concern for health promotion is to change the power structures in society that impose limits on the ability of individuals and groups to control and manage their lives in accordance with the needs and interests that they themselves have defined. This, in turn, entails an analysis of the concept of power. On a general level, power can be viewed from both zero-sum and non-zero-sum perspectives [Laverack, , p. The former understanding of power, as a matter of conflict, produces questions concerning domination and emancipation, while a non-zero-sum understanding of power foregrounds questions about how people can gain a degree of control over their lives. As Laverack Laverack, argues, both a zero-sum and a non-zero-sum understanding of power may be relevant for the practice of health promotion. In this article, the main question is whether or not the Internet can function as an empowering resource for knowledge acquisition, communication and support. Internet The focus of this article is directed at the Internet as an interactive medium for information and communication. The main feature of the Internet is said to be its accessibility and interactivity Jensen, The Internet makes a universe of information and knowledge easily accessible for anyone with a computer and an Internet connection. It also makes possible interactivity in the shape of direct feedback and real-time communication, and, not the least, contact between people independent

of time and space. An important aspect of the Internet is its potential to empower by putting more control in the hands of the user, as compared with other media [e. It is, however, important to remember that the Internet is in itself not a neutral technology to be used on equal terms by everybody; it is highly commercialized and tends, as other media do, to mediate prevailing ideas and values in society Pitts, Accessibility, anonymity and support Perhaps the most important aspect of health on the Internet is the advanced information and knowledge seeking it enables [Street and Rimal, , p. Frequent users of health sites on the Internet are patients especially those who have long-term illnesses who are searching for reliable information about their specific diseases [Poensgen and Larsson, , p. The likelihood of patients seeking information and advice on the Internet increases with the specificity and severity of their diagnosis Houston and Allison, The information and knowledge that is accessed can have a significant impact on the way that a patient comes to terms with a disease, possibly increasing control over the illness and in coping with everyday life following the onset of the disease. In a study conducted by the Boston Consulting Group von Knoop et al. In particular, the advent of the Internet as a source of health care advice has enhanced the opportunities for patients to be more actively engaged in their own treatment and care. It also seems that patients using the Internet for health information are more engaged and active in coping with their problems and in communication with their doctor, compared to those who do not seek advice from the Internet Lovich et al. If patients become better informed and knowledgeable as a result of accessing information from health sites and health communities, they may be better prepared and likely to ask more relevant and critical questions when they meet their doctors. Health on the Internet might, in the long term, affect the doctorâ€™patient relationship, moving power and initiative from the former to the latter. This is a Utopian idea often presented and discussed in the debate on health on the Internet [e. Chin, ; Kahn, , p. Whether this will be borne out by practice or not remains to be seen. However, there is a possibility that the use of the Internet as a source of health information will challenge the traditional doctorâ€™patient relationships and, as a possible extension of this, the expertâ€™lay actor relationships on a more general level. The other side of this is a strengthening of the position of the patient, and the public in general, in relation to experts and public institutions. Each individual can take the time needed to figure out what questions to ask and how to ask them. In a face-to-face situation with a doctor or health consultant, many people feel uneasy and experience stress, often forgetting to ask all the questions they had planned to ask. An additional aspect of health on the Internet is related to convenienceâ€™people can search, find and review information independent of time and space Rimal and Flora, The Internet can also make it easier for people to make contacts with others. There is no doubt that there is great potential for health communities on the Internet to work as online support or self-help groups Brennan and Fink, ; Preece and Ghazati, ; Nettleton et al. This, of course, also implies opportunities for knowledge sharing and community building Walch, Another aspect of online communities is that they have the possibility to function as arenas for mobilization and collective action for disempowered groups in society Mele, The need for a computer and Internet access in order to take part in an online community might, however, restrict the possibilities for certain disempowered groups to take part in online communication. As Mele [Mele, , p. Quality, credibility and trust The debate on health on the Internet has, so far, been strongly focused on the question of the quality and credibility of the information given on different health sites [e. When it comes to questions within the domain of clinical medicine, it is no doubt important for an information seeker to be confident in the knowledge that the respondent is a qualified medical doctor, and that the advice given is reliable and correct. However, given the focus on empowerment in this article, the introduction of quality controls and the setting of quality standards for general health sites are problematic issues; the implication is clearly that the power of judgment is solely in the hands of the expert. Medical science has a tendency to colonize the whole health domain, leaving little room for alternatives or for the lay actor to explore different ways to achieve health and well-being other than those recommended from a medical point of view Ernst, Using scientifically based quality criteria, many health sites prove to have significant shortcomings; as Katz and Rice [Katz and Rice, , p. Any quality assessment of health information on the Internet is likely to be fraught with difficulty. This is, in turn, conditioned, to a not inconsiderable extent, by concerns about privacy and confidentiality, and the credibility of the information found. The quality of Internet health information is, of course, closely linked to the trust

that people place in it. However, quality according to scientific standards and trust are by no means identical issues. The distinction between good and bad health information, and between serious health actors and the advice of quacks, is often taken for granted, but this is not necessarily the case from a lay perspective. In health promotion, lay knowledge and lay perspectives have, or should have, an important value. A truly health promotive strategy ought, according to Lupton [Lupton, , p. The digital divide A general problem with the Internet as a resource for social development is the so-called digital divide. The well-educated and well-off have access to and use the Internet to a much greater extent than those who are less well educated and who are less well off. This can be accounted for by the fact that better-educated groups in society have online access to a far greater extent than those who are less well educated Loader, However, it also applies to health on the Internetâ€”education levels are a determining factor for the use of the Internet for health purposes Andreassen et al. Another factor is income; higher-income groups tend to use the Internet for health purposes more often than lower-income groups Kalichman et al. Most likely this also applies to patients looking for specific types of information, as discussed above. The fact is that the likelihood is much greater that information-rich users looking for yet more information in a qualified and systematic way will be the predominant users of health sites, as opposed to those who have only limited information and who struggle to cope with cyberspace [Fox and Rainie, , p. For professionals involved in general health interventions, the recurring problem of reaching those most in need of support seems to be the same when it comes to Internet-supported health information and communication [Schneider et al. The digital divide and the general user characteristics of people visiting health sites on the Internet suggest that there is little reason to believe that Internet health initiatives would have any significant impact on this problem. Moreover, apart from the problem of access, there is also reason to believe that different groups in society have different interests and needs when it comes to health issues, as well as different capacities for searching for, accessing and evaluating information, i. Medicalization and healthism While the Internet is a valuable source of health information and communication, it is also a possible source of medicalization and healthism. Recent developments towards a holistic approach to health run the risk of strengthening the healthism in society Fitzpatrick, An ever-increasing number of aspects of our everyday reality have become health topics, and, as such, possible areas of control and improvement. This has been debated at some length [e. Armstrong, ; Lupton, ; Fitzpatrick, There is good reason to believe that health on the Internet, at least to some extent, promotes healthism. Other prevalent forms of interactivity were discussion forums, chat rooms, notice boards, quizzes and self-testing instruments. Advertising in terms of positive descriptions of specific products appeared on 23 sites, while 11 sites featured sales of health products. A brief review of eight prominent Swedish health sites www. Taken together, the contents of these sites form a finely meshed net encompassing the vast majority of health concerns that individuals might have. All health sites try to be authoritative and attempt to legitimize their advice by means of references made to experts and expert knowledge. However, a recent study of the information presented on Internet health sites has revealed that this type of referencing tends to be rather superficial Lamminen et al. It seems justified to ask whether this excessive focus on health promotes health or whether it is in fact more likely to promote anxiety. Discussion In some respects, the Internet, as an unlimited and uncontrollable source of information, is a good thing. It provides opportunities for people to search for and to access valuableâ€”as well as uselessâ€”information in a convenient and individually tailored way. It also provides opportunities for people to make contacts and communicate with others in matters of importance for their health and well-being. In this respect, health on the Internet is empoweringâ€”it puts more control and power in the hands of lay people. It may also function as a medium for shared experiences and knowledge between users, as well as for recognition and emotional support for people in need of support and guidance. Health on the Internet also has the potential to challenge institutionalized and professional interests.

8: Internet of Health Conference Sep , Amsterdam NL

Millions of consumers get health information from magazines, TV or the Internet. Some of the information is reliable and up to date; some is not.

9: Health Information on the Web: Finding Reliable Information

THE INTERNET AS A RESOURCE FOR HEALTH INFORMATION. One of the main uses of the internet is as an encyclopaedic information resource. Surveys consistently show that % of world-wide-web users have used it to obtain health information 3, 4.

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