

Do Internet Searches Prior to a Doctor Visit Improve Quality and Reduce Costs?

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INTRODUCTION

- The internet has had a profound impact on the world and healthcare.
- Before the Internet, information flowed from the doctor to the patient, but now, patients can directly search the Internet for answers.
- Internet use by patients as a source of information on health and disease is expanding rapidly with obvious effects on the doctor-patient relationship (Figueiredo de Oliveira, 2014).
- Patients are now taking a more active role in their care.
- Access to health information on the Internet is offering new tools and efficiencies that support an integrated healthcare system's aim to improve care and reduce cost (Patel, 2016).
- Although many of the benefits of health information technology seem obvious, it has been unclear whether this is due to an improvement in the quality of care provided or because of a decrease in costs (Chaudhry, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

- Patients and clinical providers were randomly selected from primary and specialty care clinics in Southern California and directed to an online survey.
- Patients completed an eleven-question five-point Likert scaled survey, while the clinical providers completed a seven-question five-point Likert scaled survey.
- There were 131 patients and 85 clinical providers randomly selected who completed the confidential survey over a period of three weeks.
- The surveys were collected and placed in tables.
- Pivot charts were used for analysis and evaluation. The results are in ascending order.

	HD	D	S	A	HA
1. I use the internet to research a symptom I may have					
2. I research the internet for health options instead of visiting a doctor					
3. I believe the internet replace the need for a physician diagnosis					
4. I feel prepared when I visit the doctor's office after researching a symptom first.					
5. I rely on the internet for my symptoms					
6. I believe that the internet has improved my healthcare					
7. I believe the internet has reduced my healthcare costs					
8. I believe the internet is a great source for medical information					
9. I believe a doctor is more reliable than the internet					
10. I believe a doctor is more reliable than the internet					
11. I research my symptoms before visiting a doctor					

	HD	D	S	A	HA
1. The internet replaces the need for a physician diagnosis					
2. When patients research their symptoms first, they are more prepared for their doctor visit.					
3. Patients rely on the internet for their symptoms					
4. The internet has improved healthcare					
5. The internet has reduced healthcare costs					
6. The internet is a great source for medical information					
7. A physician's diagnosis is more trusting than the internet					

RESULTS

Please select the option that you agree with most.	F	M	A	Response
10. I believe a doctor is more reliable than the internet	4.4	4.1	4.3	Agree
9. I believe a doctor has a better diagnosis than the internet	4.2	4.1	4.2	Agree
8. I believe the internet is a great source for medical information	3.4	3.6	3.5	Agree
1. I use the internet to research a symptom I may have	3.4	3.5	3.5	Agree
11. I research my symptoms before visiting a doctor	3.1	3.2	3.1	Sometimes
4. I feel prepared when I visit the doctor's office after researching a symptom first	2.9	2.9	2.9	Sometimes
2. I research the internet for health options instead of visiting a doctor	2.5	2.7	2.6	Sometimes
6. I believe that the internet has improved my healthcare	2.3	2.5	2.3	Disagree
5. I rely on the internet for my symptoms	2.0	2.2	2.1	Disagree
7. I believe the internet has reduced my healthcare costs	1.9	2.3	2.0	Disagree
3. I believe the internet replaces the need for a physician diagnosis	1.4	1.7	1.5	Disagree

I already diagnosed myself on the internet.
I'm only here for a second opinion



- Patients do not believe that the Internet replaces the need for a doctor diagnosis.
- Internet searches do not improve the quality of the visit or reduce doctor visit costs.
- Patients reported that the Internet is a great source of information and can better prepare them for a doctor visit or even replace the need for a doctor visit from time to time.

Please select the option that you agree with most.	F	M	A	Response
7. A physician's diagnosis is more trusting than the internet	4.5	4.4	4.4	Agree
6. The internet is a great source for medical information	3.5	3.7	3.6	Agree
3. Patients rely on the internet for their symptoms	3.2	3.4	3.3	Sometimes
4. The internet has improved healthcare	3.0	3.1	3.1	Sometimes
2. When patients research their symptoms first, they are more prepared for their doctor visit.	2.9	3.0	3.0	Sometimes
5. The internet has reduced healthcare costs	2.2	2.1	2.2	Disagree
1. The internet replaces the need for a physician diagnosis	1.5	1.4	1.4	Strongly Disagree

- Providers strongly disagreed with the statement that the Internet replaces the need for a diagnosis by the doctor.
- Providers believed the Internet improved the quality of doctor visits more than the patients.
- Clinical providers felt that the Internet was a great source of information, but still maintained that the doctor provides a better diagnosis than information obtained from the internet.
- Both patients and clinical providers agreed that the Internet doesn't reduce costs and that the doctor's diagnosis is better than the Internet.



DISCUSSION

- Information, both accurate or not, is just a click away on the Internet.
- The side effects of Internet use are not all bad, but they are also not all good.
- The Internet is redefining the roles of doctor and patient in more positive than negative ways.
- Internet self-diagnosis can be beneficial and even effective when practiced responsibly.
- Clinical providers should recognize that patients are going to continue using the Internet as a source of medical information and be prepared to assist patients in evaluating the quality of information found on the Internet.

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