INTERNET LITERACY OF ORTHOPAEDIC PATIENTS

AB Putti
AR Innes
Department of Orthopaedics
University of Dundee
& Perth Royal Infirmary

Introduction

• The internet is increasingly part of daily life and there is a lot of medical information available on the web.
• Most orthopaedic surgeons you speak to get the impression that patients are increasingly becoming more aware of their medical conditions and have been reading up before seeing doctors in hospital.
• The aim of the study was to assess the percentage of patients who browse the internet prior to their appointments.

Materials and Methods

• 113 elective patients (68 female and 45 male) attending Orthopaedic new patients clinic were given a questionnaire to complete.
• The average age of the patients in the survey was 53.5 years (range 18 to 83 years).

Results

• Eighty two (73%) patients had access to internet either at home or at work and 76 (67%) used the internet regularly.
• Twenty five (22%) patients had searched the internet for orthopaedic information using search engines such as Google, Yahoo and AOL, in preparation for their orthopaedic clinic appointment.
• None of them were aware of any sites specifically recommended for orthopaedic conditions.
• Twenty three of the 25 patients said that the internet had given them a better understanding of their condition whereas one patient said that it had not and only one patient said that the information confused him all the more.
• Twenty two patients said that the information they found on the website appeared reliable to them whereas one patient did not.
• All but one patient said that they would ask the doctor if they found any conflicting information.

Discussion

• Patients are mainly finding material using commercial search engine such as Google which can be inefficient and inaccurate.
• In this situation it would be useful to be in a position to guide patients to specific sites where reliable and relevant information could be found.

Discussion

• A quarter of the patients in the current survey used the internet and this number is bound to increase over the coming years.
• Recommended sites should be provided after validating their content as part of information to patients.
• This could be done on a personal basis by individual surgeons.
• However surgeons’ familiarity with what is available on the net will be variable.
• Surgeons themselves are likely to require guidance.

Conclusion

• Patients are finding Orthopaedic information using commercial search engine such as Google which can be inefficient and inaccurate.
• Recommended sites should be provided after validating their content.

Number of patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of patients</th>
<th>Complaint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Knee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wrist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact: amitputti@nhs.net
Disclosure: No conflict reported
Acknowledgement: IS Christie for poster design