



INTERNET LITERACY OF ORTHOPAEDIC PATIENTS

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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).

Number of patients	Complaint
24	Knee
23	Foot
21	Hip
14	Hand
9	Shoulder
8	Back
6	Wrist

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 and it has been found that such techniques are 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.

- 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.

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