The World Wide Web (www) is part of the Internet, a worldwide collection of computer networks that exchange data. It is hard to know how large the Web is, but one estimate suggests that it has over 11.5 billion pages. (1) As many as 4.5% of internet searches are health related (2), and as Google reports 150 million searches per day, this represents 6.75 million health related searches every day on Google alone.

There are considerations though, when searching for health information on the internet. For example, if the words palliative care are entered into Google, over 4 million results will be received. Even if the search is restricted to pages from Australia, there are over 200,000.

How trustworthy will those results be though? For example if someone has access to the internet they can create a website. Information on the internet is not regulated, with no requirement for information and resources to be reviewed for quality, accuracy or currency. Not all websites are kept up to date.

Within the Finding Evidence section on CareSearch there is information on searching the web. This includes pages on:
- Selecting search engines (how do different search engines work?)
- Using search engines (how to optimise your search)
- Evaluating quality (how to tell if a website is trustworthy).

Consumers also need to know how to discern quality information and resources, and there are corresponding pages in Finding out More within the patients and families section. This includes pages on:
- Sources of information (a selection of quality assessed websites)
- Is it trustworthy? (How to tell a good quality website)
- Using information (Using health information from the internet).

References
1. Gulli A, Sigorini A. The Indexable Web is more than 11.5 billion pages. WWW 2005 May 10-14 Chiba, Japan

CareSearch is an online resource funded by the Department of Health and Ageing to help clinicians and consumers find relevant evidence about palliative care. Available now at www.caresearch.com.au