Online Resources: Making Them Effective and Trustworthy

**Background**

With over one billion websites on the web, health professionals including primary health care providers, need to understand what is involved in creating trustworthy online resources and how to identify quality health websites.

Health On the Net, a non for profit organisation, promotes transparent and reliable health information online based on the following quality principles:
- Authority
- Complementarity
- Privacy policy
- Attribution and date
- Justifiability
- Transparency
- Financial disclosure
- Advertising policy [1].

CareSearch provides online palliative care health information and has developed specific resources for use within primary care.

**Methods**

Materials included within the CareSearch website are subject to various review processes for quality and relevance. Evidence and quality principles are used in the design and development of the website itself. Regardless of the format of any given page, the quality processes ensure that all content is:
- Relevant to the project
- Written by an appropriately qualified and experienced person
- Of suitable quality.

Content pages are provided to project staff or associates and community members for comment in the development stage before being formally assessed by an external reviewer. This engagement helps us develop strong and useful resources.

Formative evaluation has been instrumental in identifying navigation issues, lack of clarity in menu titles, accessibility concerns, and considerations in design and display. Research into strategies used by consumers and health professionals to assess trustworthiness informs communications activities and website design and display.

**Results**

Research shows that website users have defined but variable strategies to assess trustworthiness in health websites [2].

CareSearch is accredited by Health On the Net.

Over 100,000 people visit the CareSearch website each month [3].

**Conclusions**

Primary care nurses have increasing access to a wide range of online resources which should be developed against evidence-based approaches.

Ensuring that the content and presentation is effective and useful to intended user is critical to maximise the value and impact of such resources.

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References


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