Results of the 10th HON survey on health and medical Internet use (July – August 2010)

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Survey Overview

- **Time frame**: July – August 2010 on HON web site
- **Language**: English (65%) and French (35% of total results)
- **Participants**: 524 respondents from 60 countries around the world, majority – France (28%), the UK (18%), the USA (18%)
- **Target audience**: Individuals/citizens/patients (65%) and medical professionals (35%)
- **Methodology**: Non-probabilistic sampling, where appropriate the comparison with the results of survey 2005 was done

*A note: All the graphs represent a percentage for both groups of participants (where it is relevant only to citizens or professionals is mentioned) except for the slide 15.*
Participants profile

The majority of the participants are aged between 20 and 59 years old with the most active age group of 30-39 years old (30%), there were more female (65%) than male (35%) participants.

For 48% of participants English is mother tongue, for 32% it is French and for 5% it is Spanish.

58% of participants come from Europe and 22% from Northern America. Overall, most of the participants live in France (28%), the USA (18%) and the UK (18%).

23% of all participants have Master Degree and 22% at least 4 years of college/university education.
Detailed profiles of two target groups

Out of all healthcare professionals respondents (100%):
- 23% had some medical specialisation,
- 18% identified themselves as healthcare providers
- 15% as General Practitioners (GPs)

Out of all non-professionals / citizens respondents (100%):
- 19% were patients
- Additionally 14% were patients with specific condition
- 15% identified themselves as general healthcare consumers

Image credentials:
http://organicandgreenliving.wordpress.com/2010/06/22/14-months-to-50-one-real-womans-account-of-her-new-healthy-lifestyle/
Use of the Internet

On average the respondents use internet for 7 or more years (79%). This number has significantly increased over the last years from 44%

45% of the respondents connect to the Internet through the cable modem and wireless (37%) (in 2005 wireless connection was only in 4% of cases).

50% of users spend from 2 to 4 hours per day in the Internet (in 2005 36%) and 22% less than 2 hours (in 2005 39%).

96% of users spend time checking and writing emails and 93% browsing web. 60% read newsletter, online communities and 51% participate in online communities. In 2005 only 28% were reading and 23% were participating in community activities.
44% of users was searching for health information *more than 3 times during “past week”*, 25% did it from 2 to 3 times. People mostly search for disease description (69%) and medical literature (62%).

Users are looking for information for *themselves (77%)*, their children (32%), and then patient, spouse (25% each), friend (24%), relative (23%).

On average 61% of respondents visit *from 2 to 5* health related web site and 25% check from 6 to 10 web sites.
**When do you search for medical information?**

- **50%** of patients mostly search for health information disregard to consultation time (no before, no after).
- **78%** of patients say that healthcare provider has never told them about the health web site.
- **Healthcare Professionals** confirm it saying that they rarely recommend the sites disregard to “time” of consultation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Rarely or never</th>
<th>Neither rarely, nor often</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After a consultation</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During a consultation</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the consultation</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most frequently used web sites to obtain medical/health information on the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Web site Type</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Web sites of your service provider (AOL, Comcast, etc.)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized search tool (HONselect, etc.)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portal web sites (Yahoo health, Google Health, MSN Health, etc.)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web sites suggested by a friend</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web sites suggested by a health care provider</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links from a health web site</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web sites specifically providing health-related topics</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search engines (Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc.)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The types of sites users prefer to use to attain health information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Site</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Journals or publishers</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental agencies</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial medical organizations</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online News</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Communities</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceutical manufacturers</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial medical organizations</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal web sites</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mainly, the CITIZENS search for:

- Disease Descriptions: 69%
- Medical literature: 62%
- Clinical trials: 28%
- Other: 26%
- Patient community: 24%
- Alternative medicine: 22%
- Support groups: 19%
- Weight loss, exercise: 17%

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Patients participated in the survey rarely buy prescription (80%) and OCT (over the counter) drugs (72%). Both of the indicators have been increased since 2005.
The most important barriers while using the Internet to seek health information

- Information quality: 80 (2005), 80 (2010)
- Medical data privacy: 54 (2005), 60 (2010)
- Internet connection speed/download time: 45 (2005), 62 (2010)
- Inadequate tools and applications: 36 (2005), 52 (2010)
- Not enough computer or Internet training: 34 (2005), 41 (2010)
- Support for Internet use in my professional/office setting: 24 (2005), 37 (2010)
The importance of the factors listed below in improving the quality of information and service for users of a health related web site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither unimportant, nor important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pay-to-view/Pay-for-use online information or services</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsolicited Commercial Email (Spam)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercialisation/Advertising/Sponsorship</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of health information on different devices (PDA,…)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government oversight of the Internet</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual property/Copyright</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific complexity of the information</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal access for all (language, physical impairment)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy/Security/Cookies</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information transfer-rate/Performance</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of finding information/Navigation</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability (online existence) of information</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy of information</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness/Credibility</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The following agencies should have a primary responsibility to sustain the quality of health care information on web sites and set high ethical standards:

- Associations representing non-profits, international health web site developers
- Associations representing non-profits, health web site developers within each nation
- Non Governmental Organisations
- Federal (national) governments
- Associations representing for-profit and non-profit health web site developers within each nation
- International associations representing for-profit and non-profit web site developers
- Local or regional governments (such as states, municipalities, regions)

![Bar chart showing percentages of agency responsibilities: 72%, 71%, 69%, 62%, 55%, 51%, 48%].
The most familiar certifications, accreditations, or trust marks systems (absolute values):

As for the costs of certification 61% of English speaking respondents consider it should be paid by the owner of the site, 28% think of certification body of trust mark and 24% of Government. As for French-speaking users, they rated the organizations in a following way: certification body of trust mark (61%), government (34%), and owner of the web site (29%). Overall, 50% of all participants think the cost is on the owner of the web site side.
Domains trustworthiness

As for different domains, .edu (70%), .gov (69%) and .org (65%) remain to be the most credible for the users. The domain .com is considered neither credible, no non-credible by 52% of respondents (increased from 46% in 2005). National domains have gained more trust in French-speaking users (64%) than in English-speaking (19%).

Answering the question “Would a domain name dedicated to health (such as .health) help you identify and more easily search health/medical Web sites?” 47% were not sure (39% in 2005), and 28% were agree (44% in 2005). 55% agreed that only medical, evidence-based web sites should be allowed to use a .health domain name.

76% think that web sites containing health content and of hospitals should be always certified. 66% consider it appropriate for the physicians’ web sites and 46% - for the web sites selling medical software.
The seach process:
The importance of elements to create a helpful web search tool

- Quality of description: 96
- Relevance of matches: 94
- Ease of use: 93
- Matches: 88
- Speed: 87
- Overall personal evaluation of the site: 80
Among search results, how many web sites the respondents usually visit:

- 5 web sites from the top: 38%
- 10 web sites from the top: 12%
- More than 10 web sites from the top: 30%
- Not sure: 20%
Citizens - Professionals’ communication

**CITIZENS:**

- 70% of the citizens rarely email to their healthcare provider which is less than the results of 2005 (59%).
- 55% also rarely use online medical consultation service in opposite to 39% in 2005.
- The number of users using Internet to seek “second opinion” has increased from 39% in 2005 to 50% in 2010.
- 80% of citizens keep thinking that a healthcare provider should suggest trustworthy sources of online health information as well as a list of specific health web sites similar to drug prescription (75%).

**PROFESSIONALS:**

- 53% of professionals rarely or never email their patients.
- 72% of the professionals think it would be helpful for them to guide patients to a trustworthy (online) source, which shows a significant increase from 2005 (59%).
- Most of the physicians would use a trustworthy online service which allowed them to suggest reliable online health information to the patient, especially if it is free for the patient (87%) and would rather not use if the patients are charged and not reimbursed for the service (51%).
Influence of the Internet use on doctors-patients relationships

53% of citizens participated in the survey declared they discuss the results of their internet search with their doctors.

76% of healthcare professionals participated in the survey see the patients in their practice (44% in 2005). 75% of English-speaking professionals said their patients discuss the information they have found on the Internet, as for French-speaking audience, it is only a case in 47%. 64% of professionals declared they or their healthcare organization have a web site.
Quality is important for the consumers!

The importance of *access to reliable medical information* is perceived important by English (96%) and French (76%) speaking citizens. 74% of them agree that learning about health on web sites should feature interactivity and self-testing of knowledge.

Most of citizens (78%) prefer to have the option of seeking complex medical information on web sites, especially the French-speaking (91%).

57% of citizens consider the information presented on consumer web sites to be often superficial.

In 79% of cases a web search is a starting point to clarify medical information. 65% believe they understand complex medical information.
83% of users state they verify whether the web site is trustworthy or no. What exactly:

- Source of information: 88%
- Motivation: 68%
- URL (whether it is commercial web site or not): 66%
- Source of funding: 55%
Cyberchondria

49% state they were *not* anxious after looking for health information online, 29% were, and 22% were not sure.

We have also asked whether the users consider themselves as cyberchondriatics: 75% answered they do not think of themselves in such a way.
Summary of findings

- 96% use Internet to check email and 93% to browse websites.
- 61% of respondents are visiting usually from 2 to 5 websites.
- **NEW!** 60% read and 51% participate in online communities (Blogs, Forums, Social Networking, etc.), 44% use them for retrieving of health information too.
- 44% of respondents had been searching for health information in the Internet more than 3 times past week.
- In 79% of cases a web search was the starting point to clarify medical information (for citizens).
- The general search engines use for health topics has increased from 86% in 2005 to 94% in 2010.
- Mostly users are looking for Disease descriptions (69%) and Medical literature (62%).
- 29% admitted they were anxious after looking for health information online, 22% were not sure.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND INTEREST!

FURTHER QUESTIONS?
EMAIL TO: NATALY.PLETNEVA@HEALTHONNET.ORG