

The studies in brief

Evaluation	Mandated and elaborated by the French National Health Authority (HAS) By two experienced evaluators of HON
Longitudinal	Evaluation after 6 months of certification 165 HONcode certified websites (group A) T0 = certification request T1 = certification delivery T2 = 6 months after the certification
Comparative	Comparison between certified websites and website not asking for certification Group A : 165 sites certified for 6 months Control sample : 165 non-certified websites (group B)
Judgment criteria	HONcode non conformance Non conformance noticed after 6 months Non conformance to the principles 1-4-5-8

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The HONcode principles

Authoritativeness	Indicate the qualifications of the authors
Complementarity	Information should support, not replace, doctor-patient relationship; Mission and Audience of site
Privacy	Respect the privacy and confidentiality of personal data submitted to the site by the visitor
Attribution	Cite the source(s) of published information and dating of medical and health pages
Justifiability	Site must back up claims relating to benefits and performance
Transparency	Accessible presentation, identities of editor and Webmaster, accurate email contact
Financial disclosure	Identify funding sources
Sponsorship	Clearly distinguish advertising from editorial content

Improving the transparency of health information found on the internet through the HONcode: an impact study

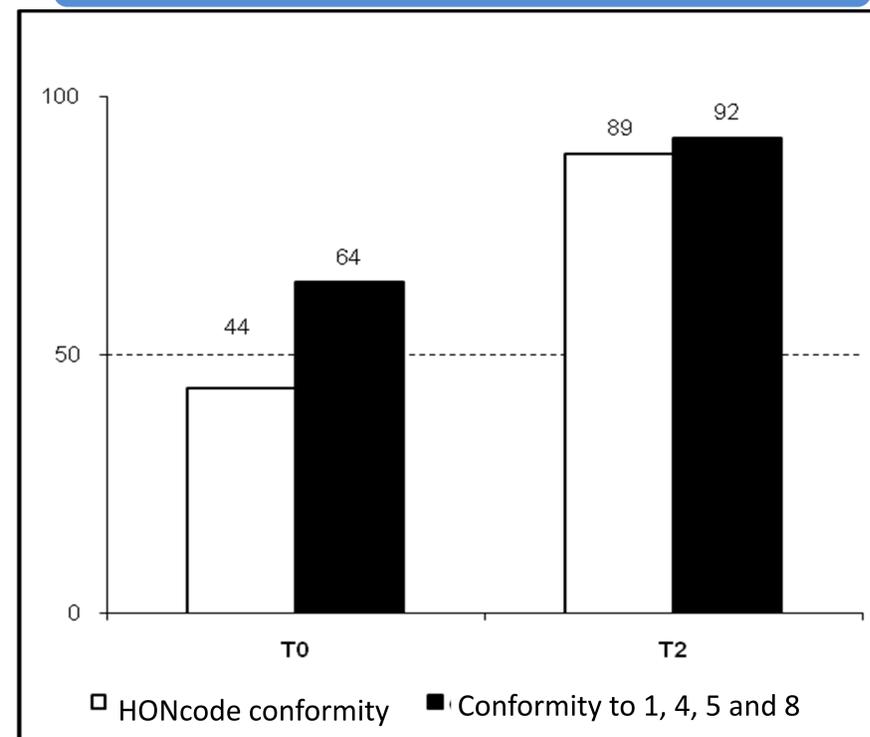
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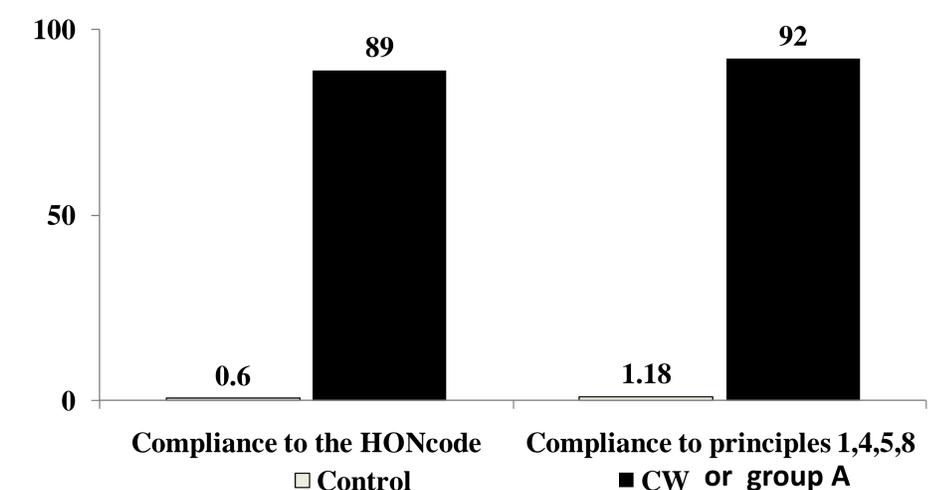
Longitudinal study



→ T0: 44% HONcode compliant
→ T2: 89% HONcode compliant

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Comparative study



→ 89% from group A were compliant to the HONcode versus 0.6 from the control group
→ 1'087 non conformity noticed for control group versus 27 for group A (CW) => an average of 6 non-respected HONcode principles per control website

CONCLUSION: Outside of a certification process, the respect of the HONcode principles by health websites appears to be extremely low. In our study, only 0.6% of control websites (group A) respect all the HONcode principles against 89% for certified websites. Certification appears to be an effective means of enforcing the HONcode principles in a sustainable way since 89% (147 websites) of the certified websites were always compliant at least six months after obtaining the certification. The certification improve the transparency of the health information provided in the site but can not warranty the accuracy of the information.



HON: developing practical ethical solutions to find and promote reliable health information on the Internet since 1996.