

Health On the Net Foundation

Before /After pictures survey

June-September 2011

HONcode team

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Summary of the Survey

Introduction

During certification and re-examination procedures, the Health On the Net Foundation (HON) was faced with websites posting before and after pictures on its pages, mainly with regard to cosmetic surgery. HON noticed that the publication of before/after pictures poses difficulties because they can create false expectations among website users and HON cannot guarantee that these pictures have not been modified, i.e. HON is not able to verify the authenticity of these pictures. However, at the same time, these pictures also are a tool to illustrate medical information and to demonstrate the quality of the work of a physician. Thus, the question arose **how to treat websites publishing before/after pictures**. Therefore, HON decided *to launch a survey to gauge public opinion* with regard to displaying before/after pictures on a website.

Survey questions before/after pictures

The survey was conducted by the Health On the Net Foundation and contained the following closed questions:

- Are you a **health professional** or a **non-health professional**?
- Are you an **editor** of a medical/health website dedicated to plastic/aesthetic surgery or not?
- If you find before/after pictures on a medical/health website
 - You find this **useful**?
 - It does **not bother** you?
 - You find this **suspicious**?
 - It **bothers** you?
- HONcode certified website
 - Should **not display** these before/after pictures?
 - Should be able to **display** before/after pictures?
- Is this questionnaire **understandable** or not?

Furthermore, **contact** information could be given and the ability to **comment** on the survey was available.

Purpose

Purpose:

The purpose of the survey was to understand the opinion of the health professionals and the non-health professionals with regard to the regulation of publication of before/after pictures.

Facts:

- The survey was placed on the HON website and alongside the certificates of the HONcode certified websites from mid June until the end of September
- Available in French and English.
- HON received in total 1365 responses to the survey.

Results

Main findings:

- 1365 responses have been received. 29.5% of these responses came from health professionals and 5.9% of the respondents indicated to be an editor of a cosmetic surgery website.
- 25% of the respondents consider the before/after pictures on the website useful, while 45.3% considers the pictures suspicious.
- 68.8% of the respondents find that HONcode certified websites should be able to display before/after pictures, while 30.2% considers that HONcode certified websites should not display before/after pictures.

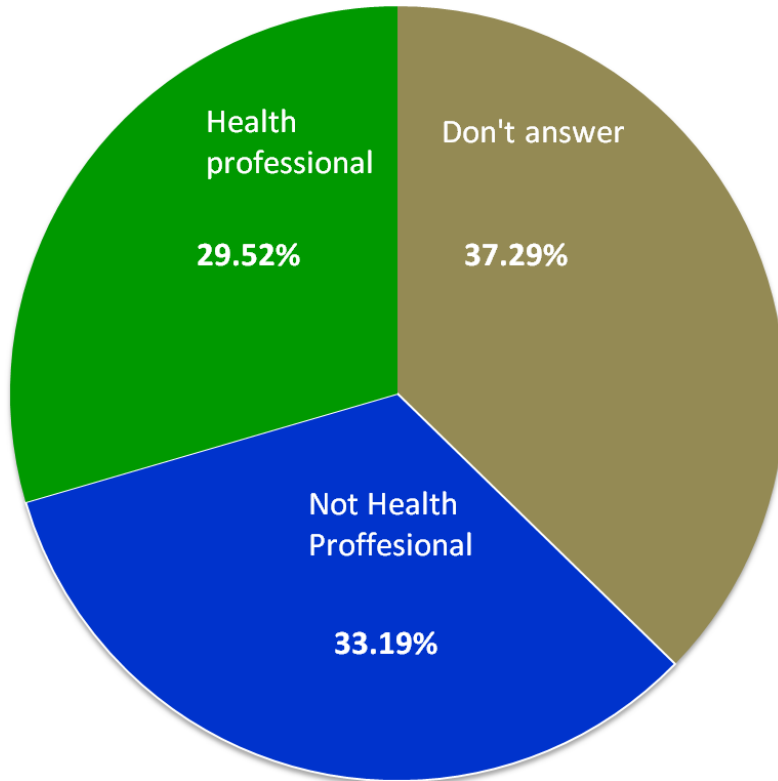
Preliminary conclusion

The **majority** of the respondents consider the publication of before/after pictures on a website **suspicious**. At the same time, the **majority** of the respondents also find that the websites should be able to **display** these pictures. This means that, to **reduce the suspiciousness** of before/after pictures, action should be undertaken but that no significant need exists among website users to have a prohibition on the use of these pictures. Therefore, HON is in the process of **developing a guideline** concerning the publication of before/after pictures, taking also into account the **valuable comments** given by the respondents.

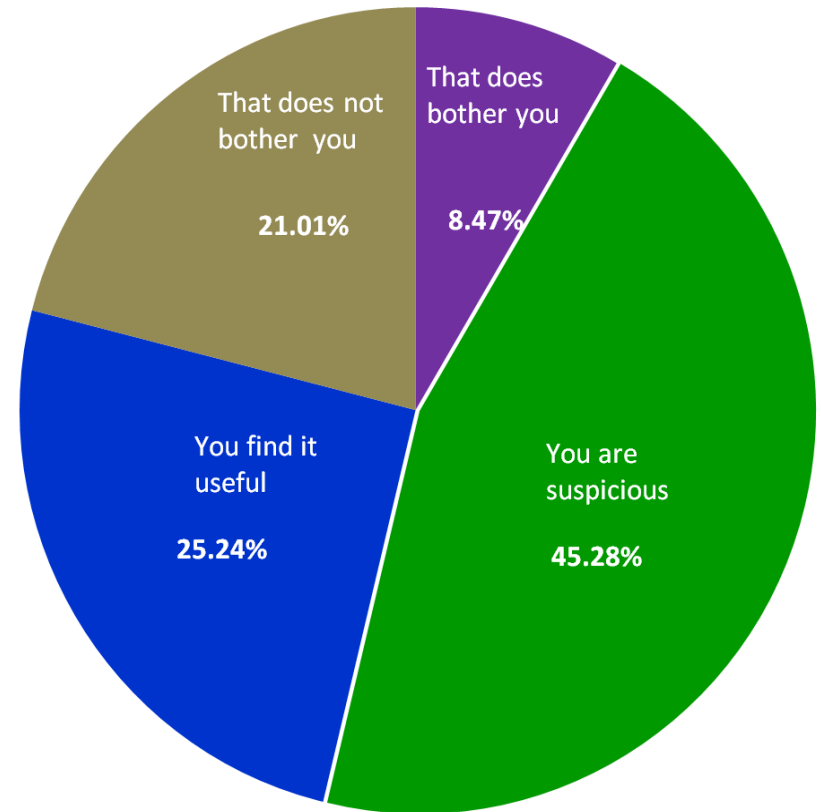
Frequency Charts

Frequency Charts For Total Population (1)

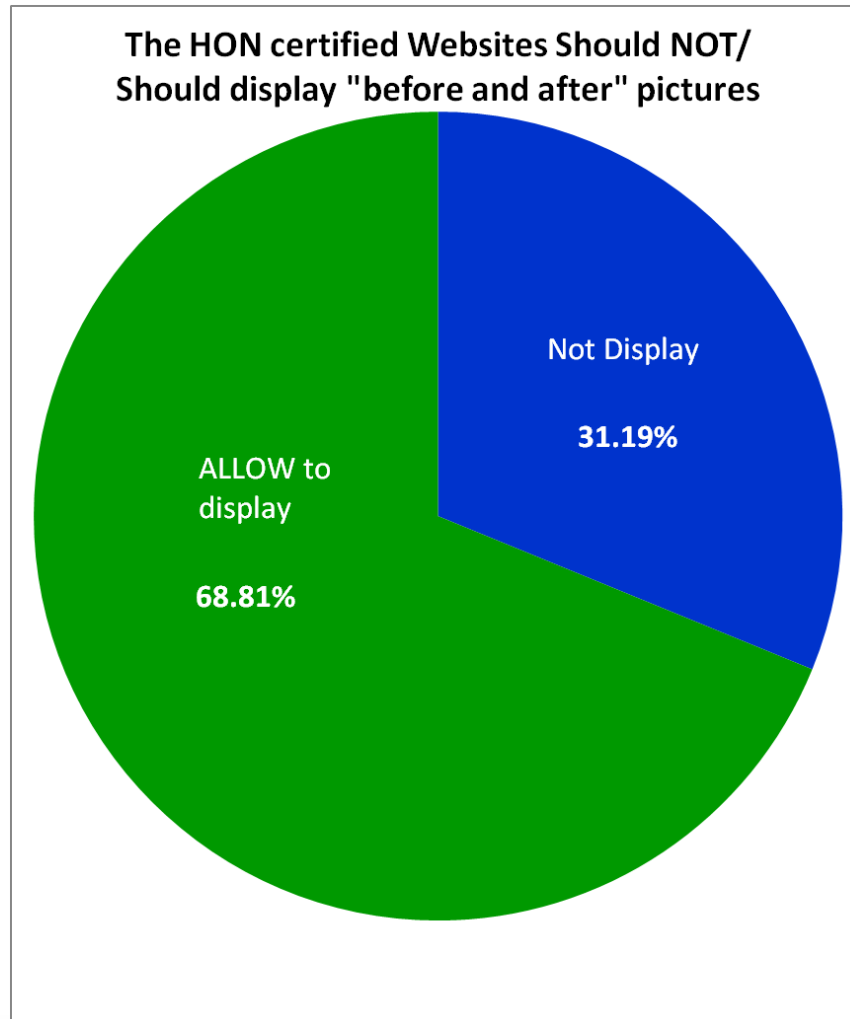
You are: a health professional not a health professional



When you find "before and after" pictures on Health Websites:

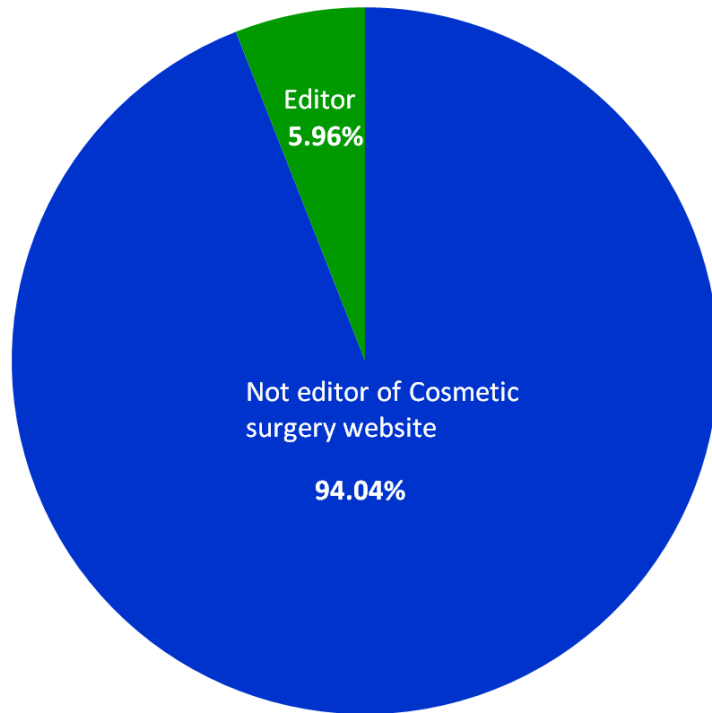


Frequency Charts For Total Population (2)

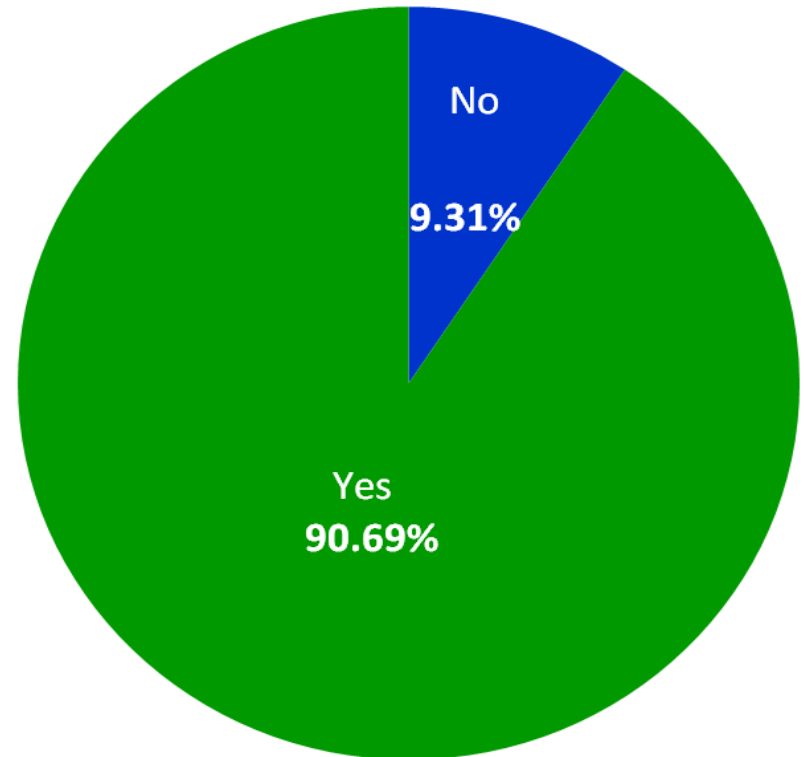


Frequency Charts For Total Population (3)

I am an editor/I am not an editor of Health Websites dedicated to Cosmetic Surgery



Is this question understandable?



Frequency Tables

- the percentage of persons who responded to the questionnaire,
- the percentage of how people perceive before/after pictures
- the percentage of people who feels that HONcode certified website could or not display before/after pictures

You are: A health professional / Not a health professional				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	health professional	403	29.5	29.5
	not health professional	453	33.2	33.2
	don't answer	509	37.3	37.3
	Total	1365	100.0	100.0

When you find "before and after" pictures on health websites (4 options)				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	useful	286	21.0	25.2
	not bother	238	17.4	21.0
	suspicious	513	37.6	45.3
	bothers you	96	7.0	8.5
	Total	1133	83.0	100.0
Missing	System	232	17.0	
Total		1365	100.0	

The HONcode certified websites: Display or not before/after picture				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	NOT Display	412	30.2	31.2
	ALLOW to Display	909	66.6	68.8
	Total	1321	96.8	100.0
Missing	System	44	3.2	
Total		1365	100.0	

- percentage of the respondents who is an editor of a cosmetic surgery website

- percentage of respondents who find the questionnaire understandable or not

I am an editor / I am NOT an editor				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	editor cosmetic surgery website	80	5.9	6.0
	NOT editor cosmetic surgery website	1263	92.5	94.0
	Total	1343	98.4	100.0
Missing	System	22	1.6	
Total		1365	100.0	

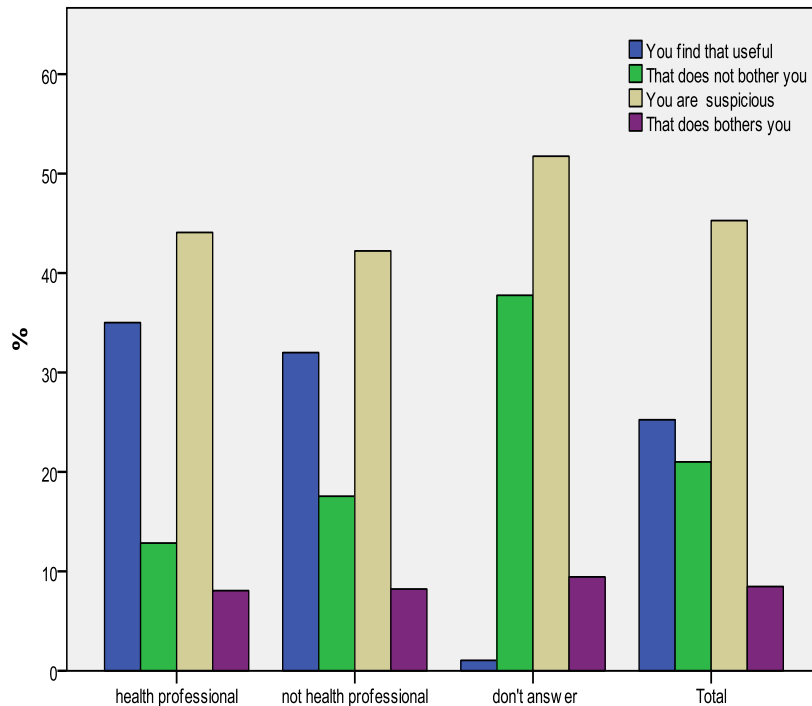
Is this questionnaire understandable				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	yes	1218	89.2	90.7
	no	125	9.2	9.3
	Total	1343	98.4	100.0
Missing	System	22	1.6	
Total		1365	100.0	

Cross tabulation comparison

Profession Groups Comparison (1)

Here a comparison is made between the groups of respondents (health professionals, not health professionals, and the unknown group) to see if there is a significant difference in their answer to the question how they perceive before/after pictures on a website. A further explanation follows on the next slide.

When you find "before and after" pictures on health websites (within groups percentages)



You are: A health professional / Not a health professional

When you find "before and after" pictures on health websites (4 options) * You are: A health professional / Not a health professional Cross tabulation

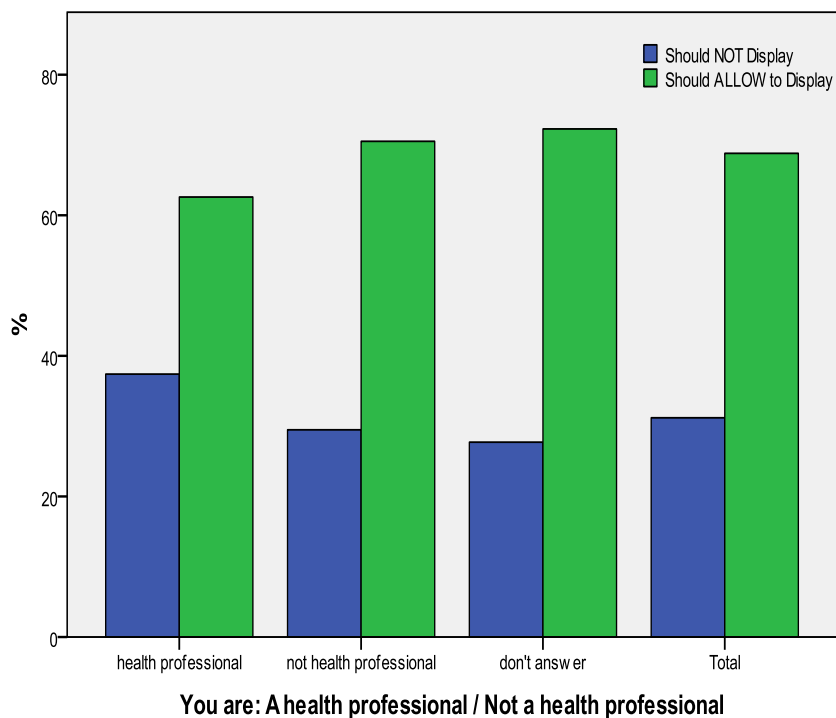
		You are: A health professional / Not a health professional			Total
		health professional	not health professional	don't answer	
When you find "before and after" pictures on health websites (4 options)	useful	35.0%	32.0%	1.0%	25.2%
	not bother you	12.8%	17.6%	37.8%	21.0%
	suspicious	44.1%	42.2%	51.7%	45.3%
	bothers you	8.1%	8.2%	9.4%	8.5%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Profession Groups Comparison (2)

- A small difference can be noticed between the groups of professionals and non professionals in the way that they replied to the question how they perceive the pictures. They assume the “before and after” pictures to a bigger percent suspicious (44% for health professionals and 42% for not health professionals) and to an important percentage useful (35% for health professionals and 32% for not health professionals). While the answer given by the respondents who didn’t respond if they are health professionals or not differentiate from the other two groups: They assume the “before and after” pictures rather suspicious with a percentage of 52 %, while 37, 8 % don’t bother.

Here a comparison is made between the groups of respondents (health professionals, not health professionals, and the unknown group) to see if there is a significant difference in their answer to whether HON should or should not allow the display of these pictures on a website. No significant difference could be found.

The HONcode certified websites: Should NOT / Should display "before and after pictures"



The HONcode certified websites: Should NOT / Should *
You are: A health professional / Not a health professional
Crosstabulation

% within You are: A health professional / Not a health professional

	You are: A health professional / Not a health professional			Total
	health professional	not health professional	don't answer	
The HONcode certified websites: Should NOT / Should	NOT Display	ALLOW to Display		
	37.4%	29.5%	27.7%	31.2%
	62.6%	70.5%	72.3%	68.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

There is not a significant difference in the answers given on that question within the groups

Some useful comments from respondents:

Non-health Professionals

- “If before and after pictures are displayed, they should be true to the actual results without "air brushing" or otherwise digitally altered. There should also be some sort of disclaimer or authenticity statement.”
- “The question should have stated "before and after pictures of cosmetic surgeries." As it was, I was left wondering "Of what?"”
- “Before and after does not bother me, but I expect before and after to be an advertisement and to be identified as such.”

Health Professionals

- “In my opinion, the owner of a HONcode certified website would need to be required to demonstrate proof (DIFFICULT!), or at a minimum, assert that the before and after pictures: 1. are un-retouched 2. (if it's a provider who is trying to obtain HON certification for their website) represent work performed by the provider who is claiming to have done the procedure(s)- and are not from a library made available for payment to anyone. 3. Provide a disclaimer that actual results may vary significantly from the work depicted in the photos due to unpredictability. 4. The site should also be required to show before & after cases in which the procedure outcome was not ideal, in order to give the user a balanced view.”
- “You are missing an option:HONcode certified websites should be REQUIRED to show before and after pictures to better understand contour and sculpture issues that can be mislead without access to such images. Try to evaluate or discuss DaVinci or Michalenglo's work without the images? Actually videos are even better to document how tissues move and the emotional components that pictures only partially demonstrate.”

Follow-up

Follow-up on the Before/After Pictures

The conclusion drawn from the before/after survey:

- People, in general, are suspicious when before/after pictures are shown on a website
- At the same time, people do not consider that before/after pictures should not be displayed on a website

What to do? -> To diminish the suspiciousness of displayed before/after pictures and to try to make these pictures trustworthy for as far as possible.

Therefore, the next step taken by HON is to develop a guideline concerning the publication of before/after pictures for HONcode certified websites.

**Thank you very much for your interest
and participation!**

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