

[IMAGE]

Health Information: It's a Matter of Trust

Only a decade ago, most people relied on their local doctor to get the latest health news and information. Thanks to the Internet, that situation has become a thing of the past, as health information of every shape and size is now literally at a person's fingertips. How reliable is that information, and who do people trust more – their doctor, or the Internet? That's the question researchers in the United States recently attempted to answer.

In the study, scientists interviewed more than 6,300 adults about their use of various sources (the Internet, radio, television, etc.) for health information. In addition to rating their level of trust for each source, they were asked which source they would go to for information on a specific condition (cancer), and where they actually went to look for information.

More people reported trusting their doctor more than any other source; 62.4 percent of the respondents said they trusted the information provided by physicians "a lot," compared to just 23.9 percent of information on the Internet. However, when they were asked where they went to first for information on cancer, 48.6 percent reported using the Internet versus 10.9 percent who reported going to a health care provider.

As this study shows, health care providers are still the most trusted source of health information available – but they're not always the primary source of information. It is important that all health care providers do what they can to maintain that level of trust with their patients. Doing so improves communication between doctors and patients, makes patients feel more empowered about the care they receive, and makes for a greater relationship for all parties involved.

Hesse BW, Nelson DR, Kreps GL, et al. Trust and sources of health information. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, Dec. 12/26, 2005;165:2618-2624.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=864&no_paginate=true&no_b=true