

TITLE- POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OF INTERNET HEALTH RESOURCES ON PATIENTS PRESENTING TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

BACKGROUND-Internet use for healthcare decision-making is now an integral resource for patients and providers. The majority of US adults access the Internet for information about specific disease or health problems. High rates of web-based health resource utilization among emergency department (ED) patients are suspected; the prevalence of Internet use among ED patients has not been previously described.

OBJECTIVE-Determine rates of Internet use among ED patients, patients' trust in Internet resources; whether patient made their physician aware of information they received from the Internet.

METHODS-We distributed a 20-question survey to consenting adult patients at the University of Utah ED from December 2010-March 2012. Patients were eligible to participate if they spoke English, ≥ 18 years old, clinically stable, and deemed mentally competent. Patients were excluded if sent to the ED by their primary care physician (PCP), brought in by Emergency Medical Service (EMS), or accompanied by law enforcement personnel.

RESULTS-704 patients completed the survey during their ED visit; median age was 43.6 years and 58% female. Of the participants, 78.4% accessed the Internet specifically for health-related information, 49.3% reported accessing the Internet within the previous week for health information and 45.3% looked for information related specifically to their ED presentation. 77.1% of patients stated that they either somewhat or completely trusted the health information they received from the Internet; compared to 93.6% who either somewhat or completely trusted the information they received from the emergency physician but only 7.4% informed the emergency physician that they accessed the Internet for health-related concerns before coming to the ED.

CONCLUSION-A large percentage of ED patients use the Internet for healthcare informatics. Patients place high trust in the sources utilized, therefore physicians should discuss information received prior to their ED visit; consider distributing information to patients regarding reliable Internet health resources.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the demographics of ED patients accessing the internet
- Develop an awareness of frequency of internet use among patients for health information and their perceived reliability
- Determine modalities to increase communication between patients and providers regarding internet use and information accuracy