



The Digital Patient

ETHICS OF CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AND SHARED DECISION-MAKING

6TH ANNUAL HEALTHCARE ETHICS CONFERENCE

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Bio and COI

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No conflicts of interest

1

Differentiate sources of online health information.

2

Understand the role and ethical dimensions of online health information in the patient-provider relationship.

3

Employ online health information resources to support shared decision-making.

Objectives

Have you used a smartphone to research symptoms or access a patient portal in the last year?

Who is the Digital Patient?

96% of adults age 18-29 say they live in a house with at least one smartphone (51% say three or more smartphones). (Pew 2017)

74% of millennials value the ability to book appointments and pay bills online while selecting a doctor. 60% are interested telehealth options. (Salesforce 2015)

1% of all Google searches are symptom-related. (Pinchin 2016)

(Pew 2017, Salesforce 2015, Pinchin 2016)

Medical information

- Illness
- Treatment

Health/Fitness information:

- How to stay healthy
- Diet, Exercise, Hygiene

Social media:

- Online communities of patients, caregivers, and providers

What is Online Health Information?

What is the Problem?

“Imperfections of both the information’s quality and the patients’ evaluation capabilities support the necessity of a powerful doctor. However, patients unaware of their limited evaluation capabilities may nevertheless behave more powerful in the relationship, causing discrepancies with the doctor.”

(Christmann 2013)

Have you used the internet
to research symptoms in the
last year?

Online Health Information

81% of U.S. adults use the internet.

- Of those, 72% say they have looked online for health information in the past year.
- Of those, 59% say they have ever gone online to diagnose a medical condition they or someone else might have.

So 35% of U.S. adults are Online Diagnosticians.

(Pew 2013)

Online Diagnostosers

41% of Online Diagnostosers said their diagnosis was confirmed by the clinician. An additional 2% say it was partially confirmed.

35% said they did not visit a clinician.

18% said a clinician did not agree or offered another opinion.

(Pew 2013)

Online Diagnostosers

Online health information is here to stay and online diagnosis is likely to become more common.

- This isn't a bad thing. Most Online Diagnostosers still consult a doctor after doing their own research and many of them handle the information well.
- But it does affect the patient-provider relationship. So what can be done to manage drawbacks and benefits?

The Patient-Provider Relationship

The patient-provider relationship is built on knowledge asymmetry.

- The patient is vulnerable and must trust the knowledge and skill of the doctor can restore their health.
- Consistent with paternalism.

A better-informed patient reduces the knowledge asymmetry.

- The Online Diagnoser still relies on the knowledge and skill of the doctor, but they take a proactive in the maintenance of their health.
- Consistent with movement away from paternalism and toward shared decision making.

The Patient-Provider Relationship

Patients report being skeptical of OHI mediated through social media, or by online doctors without access to their records.

Patients are still seeing doctors and still report general awareness of the importance of physician expertise, and many express worry that their online research will offend doctors.

Doctors generally do not report feeling threatened or undermined by patients doing their own research.

(Silver 2015, Stevenson 2007)

Applying the Four Principles of Bioethics

Beneficence

Non-Maleficence

Respect for Autonomy

Justice

Applying the Four Principles of Bioethics

Beneficence

- Cultivating good research habits in patients and caregivers can improve engagement and health literacy.
- Engaged and health literate patients and caregivers support shared decision-making.

Non-Maleficence

Respect for Autonomy

Justice

Applying the Four Principles of Bioethics

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Respect for Autonomy

- Patients and caregivers do their own research to become better informed decision-makers.
- Supporting patients in this process supports their autonomy.

Justice

Applying the Four Principles of Bioethics

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- For many, research using OHI may serve as an important cost containment and efficiency measure.
- Visiting the doctor is costly and OHI can aid patients in making effective use of limited resources.

What Can Clinicians Do?

Know the
resources

Start the
conversation

Foster
collaboration

Know the Resources


Search results for "pain in lower left abdomen".

Search bar: pain in lower left abdomen

Filters: All, Images, News, Videos, Shopping, More, Settings, Tools

About 21,500,000 results (0.58 seconds)

These **symptoms** may include: **Tenderness**, cramps, or pain in the abdomen (usually in the lower left side but may occur on the right) that is sometimes worse when you move. Fever and chills. A **bloated** feeling, abdominal swelling, or **gas**.




www.healthline.com

[Diverticulitis Symptoms: Stomach Pain, Gas, Nausea, and More](https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/tc/diverticulitis-symptoms)
<https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/tc/diverticulitis-symptoms>

Buttons: About this result, Feedback

- People also ask
- What is located on the lower left side of y
 - What causes pain in the left side of the s
 - Why do I have pain on my left side?
 - Where is your abdominal area?

Groups See All



Alzheimers and Dementia Caregivers Support +1 Join


17K members · 10+ posts a day

HELLO AND WELCOME TO ALZHEIMERS AND DEMENTIA CAREGIVERS SUPPORT ABOUT OUR CONTENT: You will see post...

Colon cancer

Also called: colorectal cancer

ABOUT SYMPTOMS TREATMENTS



Symptoms include abdominal pain and change in bowel habits

A cancer of the colon or rectum, located at the digestive tract's lower end.

Common

More than 200,000 US cases per year

- Treatable by a medical professional
- Requires a medical diagnosis
- Lab tests or imaging always required

Early cases can begin as noncancerous polyps. These often have no symptoms but can be detected by screening. For this reason, doctors recommend screening for colon cancer starting at age 50.

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Google Symptom Search

Health conditions related to this search

Headaches can have causes that aren't due to underlying disease. Examples include lack of sleep, an incorrect eyeglass prescription, stress, loud noise exposure, or tight headwear.

→ More about headache

Migraine

A **headache** of varying intensity, often accompanied by nausea and sensitivity to light and sound.

Symptoms may include

- Acute **headache**
- Nausea
- Severe **Headache**

Tension headache

A mild to moderate **pain** often described as feeling like a tight band around the head.

Symptoms may include

- **Headache**
- Muscle **pain**
- Sensitivity to light

Individual cases may vary. Consult a doctor for medical advice. Sources: Mayo Clinic and others. Learn more

Feedback

Headache

A painful sensation in any part of the head, ranging from sharp to dull, that may occur with other symptoms.

Common causes of this symptom
Headaches can have causes that aren't due to underlying disease. Examples include lack of sleep, an incorrect eyeglass prescription, stress, loud noise exposure, or tight headwear.

Self-treatment

Seeking medical care

HEALTH CONDITIONS RELATED TO THIS SEARCH

Stress

Pressure or tension that results from a demanding situation. Stress can be physical, emotional, psychological, or a combination of these.

Migraine

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Feedback

Self-treatment

Over-the-counter remedies that may reduce headache pain include aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Resting in a darkened room may also help. Dengue fever warning: If you think you might have dengue fever, see a doctor and avoid taking aspirin or ibuprofen.

Seeking medical care

Make an appointment to see a doctor if you

- Start having frequent headaches
- Are getting worse over time
- Can't work, sleep or do daily activities
- Don't improve with self-treatment

See a doctor immediately if you

- Feel worse than usual
- Get a sudden, severe headache
- Become confused, slur your speech, or faint
- Have one-sided numbness or paralysis, or trouble seeing, speaking, or walking
- Develop a fever higher than 102°F (39°C)
- Experience nausea or vomiting

Start the Conversation

Ask patients about the research they have done, if any.

Ask about the resources they use and offer recommendations.

Make it clear that patient research is welcomed and supported.

Foster Collaboration

Engage with the research completed by Online Diagnosticians.

Guide patients and caretakers to reliable resources.

Demonstrate that you share that same interests as your patient, building trust.

What Can Patients Do?

Know the
resources

Prepare for
the
Appointment

Foster
collaboration

Know the Resources

Learn how to identify high quality resources.

Know when it's time to talk to your doctor.

Prepare for the Appointment

Write down questions for your doctor. If something doesn't make sense, your doctor will be able to help you make sense of it.

Approaching with questions promotes collaboration instead of challenge.

Foster Collaboration

Communicate about your research and look for opportunities to collaborate.

Ask for help finding reliable resources of online health information.

Discussion

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Thank You!

Q&A

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