Program Script

HEALTH ONLINE: FINDING INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST

National Network of Libraries of Medicine

nnlm.gov/allofus/digitalhealthliteracy

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Introduction

Thank you for coming here today to learn about ways to find reliable and trustworthy health information online. (Information about organization presenting).

Today's program is possible from a grant supported by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine and All of Us research program. Workshop materials were developed by Wisconsin Health Literacy, a non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin.

Handouts

Handout 1 (with computer image): lists recommended websites and has website evaluation checklist on the back. The checklist is adapted from the National Libraries of Medicine Web Eval Checklist.

Handout 2 (with note space): highlights sections talked about during the workshop with space to take notes. On the backside of the handout, at the bottom, is the program URL https://wihealthliteracy.wixsite.com/healthonline in case you would like to visit the website later.

Online Program

(Ask participants) "Who has left the doctor's office with questions, tried doing research of a family member or friend's illness, or had concerns of new symptoms that just came about? What have you done to get answers?

You may be like many of us and the first thing we do is go online to search Google, or "Dr. Google", to see what information we can find.

There is nothing wrong with going online to search for information. Technology is a big part of today's world and is only going to be used more and more. What is important is how we use the information we find online to maintain our health and help us make healthcare decisions. You want to be able to pick out information that is fact, true, and reliable from opinion, bias, and lies…because anyone can put up a webpage.

That is part of what we are going to talk about today. We will talk about:

- Searching for health information that can be trusted
- How to read a webpage – finding quick facts and key points
- How to tell if the information you found is from a good source
- Finding websites in other languages
- Differences between using a computer or mobile device
- Local places to use the internet
- Using other online resources for your health

It is important to remember, what you find online does not replace the advice from a medical professional. Talk with your doctor before taking the advice of what you found online. Share what you learned online with your doctor.

Common Web Terms

It is okay if you are not familiar with using a computer or tablet. Let's review a few key terms to help you in today's program.

URL – this is the web address. For example, the page we are looking at has a URL of https://wihealthliteracy.wixsite.com/healthonline.

Search Bar – where you type in the words you want to search. We will practice using a search bar next.

Browser – the program you use to go online. For example, the Apple iPad has a Safari browser. When on a PC you can use Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox.

Domain – three letters at the end of a URL, abbreviated for the type of business that owns the website. We will discuss this later in the presentation.

Social Media – websites and apps to communicate with others and share or create different content such as videos and photos. Examples, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram. We are not going to talk about social media today.

Scroll – to move up, down or sideways on a computer screen or mobile device. To scroll on a mobile device you will want to use one finger and swipe up or down. You can also zoom in and out by opening and closing your thumb and pointer finger on the screen *(demonstrate for participants).*

Spam – this is not the can of Spam you may know. This can be very harmful to your computer system and privacy if you are not careful. Be cautious of pop-ups and what you click on; be cautious of emails from unknown senders or senders that pretend to be someone you know; and be cautious of sharing your information on websites that are not trusted and secure.

Hyperlink – may be a symbol similar to the one on the screen, or the words may be underlined, bold or in a different color. Always read the hyperlink and know what you are clicking on before you click.

(Show participants what happens when you click on a hyperlink and a new tab opens. Explain how to navigate between the tabs open and how to get back to the page started on after opening a hyperlink.)

How can using online resources for health be helpful?

(Let participants answer this question first before reviewing.)

- Find information quickly
- Check your health symptoms
- Research diseases
- Communicate with your doctor or nurse
- Look for wellness tips
- Track your health conditions
- Much more...

Search for health information

The internet has a great tool to help us look for information and websites, especially when we may not know where to start looking. This is called a search engine. Examples of a search engine are Google and Bing. *(Have participants click on the Google hyperlink to see what it looks like.)*

Search bars are on search engine sites (*point to search bar*). You can also use the space where you type the URL as a search bar (*point to URL space and type an example*).

When you search using a search engine, like Google or Bing, marketing companies may track your searches to personalize advertisements based on your searches. They do this to have search results and advertisements pop-up related to your search and visit history. They try to make your online experience more personal and appealing based on this. If you would do not want your searches tracked, there is an option. You can use the search engine, DuckDuckGo and not have a search tracked. DuckDuckGo does not collect or share any of your personal information. This is only limited to what you search in DuckDuckGo. If you go outside that search engine tab, the internet can start tracking again. *(Have participants click on the DuckDuckGo hyperlink.)*

If you want privacy on all tabs, you can open a private browser. For example, Google Chrome Incognito browser or Safari browser have a private viewing mode. The advantage for using this privacy tool is you do not have to worry about just the search being tracked. Everything you do online will be not be tracked. Your personal information will not be stored. This can be helpful for filling out hospital forms online or paying bills. *(Show participants how to open the Google Chrome Incognito browser from the Chrome browser 3 dot drop down feature. Show participants how to open a private window in Safari.)*

Tips for searching, focus on the keywords to narrow your search.

Examples:

- List multiple symptoms: tooth hurts, pain by nose, headache – include all of that in one search
- Use full disease name/acronyms spelled out: how do I understand my explanation of benefits vs. EOB
- Gender specific: female stomach cramping vs. male stomach cramping
- Age specific: healthy foods for babies under 2 years old, or at what temperature should an adult go to the doctors (will be different than an infant)
- Limit abbreviations: dr. = doctor, idk = I don't know – spell out words and try not to use short hand

Let's try a search

(Read the following scenario to the participants. Have them do three separate searches of the bulleted words listed. Give them a few minutes and get their feedback on what appears as search results.)

#1. You just saw the doctor about your symptoms. They told you it sounds like an upper respiratory infection. You are given papers before you leave, called an after visit summary. You want to learn more about your diagnoses. On the papers you see the following words:

- upper respiratory infection
- cold
- URI

Using a search engine, search the words listed above. What differences do you see from your search results?

(Point out how URI has nothing related to upper respiratory infection, most of the time University of Rhode Island pops-up. Cold results focus on advertised products, such as Theraflu. Spelling out upper respiratory infection gives a nice diagram and most thorough information.)

If you are unsure how to spell out words or do not know what the acronym stands for, like URI, you can put "medical" after it, so your search engine recognizes you are searching for a medical term.

(Ask participants) From these search results, do you think you would find the best information from the top two searches?

No, it is not always the top two search results that have the best information. You need to scroll through the search results and compare the different websites. Many top results are paid advertisements. You need to review the website names, subject titles and brief description to give you a better idea.

How to read a webpage

Scanning information on a webpage helps you find quick facts about the site. Scanning is an easy way to find what you looking for. It will help you know if the website you are on is about the topic you are searching for, or if you should search another website.

You most likely scan information rather than reading word for word.

Scanning Tips:

- Start with bigger, bolder words
- Read left to right
- Use left tool bar and top menu bar to navigate topics
- Read content before clicking on links
- When scanning from search results using a search engine:
  - Scan multiple reviews and not only the top two results
  - If you don't find what you want, retype in the search box, don't continue to add words to what you already searched

(Review the colored page diagram that splits the page into Main Content, Supplementary Content, and Ads.)

Look at the webpage example layout. The yellow section is the Main Content. This is the page's purpose. The quality of the Main Content is important to the topic you searched. If you do not see the topic you searched for in the Main Content you may want to try another search result.

Many pages have Advertisements (Ads). Without advertising, some webpages could not exist because it costs money to maintain a website and create high quality content. Just because a website does or does not have an Ad doesn't tell the quality of the website. Look at the content of the Ad and what the Ad is promoting. Is it related to health and seem to be a valuable product or service? Or is the Ad farfetched and trying to sell you on a scam, get you to subscribe and/or pay for services, or not be an appropriate Ad for the website?

Learning to read a webpages Main Content and Ads is one step in checking for credibility of the page.

Now we will review more steps in checking a website for credibility.

How to tell if information is good or harmful

Be a detective!

Who is responsible for the website?

Who created the content on the page you are evaluating?

Websites are usually very clear about who created the content on the page. There are many reasons for this:

- Commercial websites may have copyrighted material they want to protect.
- Businesses want users to know who they are.
- Artists, authors, musicians, and other original content creators usually want to be known and appreciated.
- Foundations often want support and even volunteers.
- High quality stores want users to feel comfortable buying online.

Most websites have "contact us" or "about us" or "about" pages that provide information about who owns the site.

- To find contact or customer service information for a website, start with the homepage. Look for a "contact us" or "customer service" link. Explore the website if you cannot find a "contact us" page. Sometimes it is hidden at the bottom of the page.

- Look at "About Us' section on the site. Sometimes it is hidden at the bottom of the page.
  - Many websites want to tell users how great they are. Some have customer reviews or ratings. When the website says one thing about itself, but reliable outside sources do not agree with what the website says, trust the outside sources.
  - Do not just assume websites you personally use are visited by everyone and are good. Please do research! You might be surprised at what you find.
- Unbiased researched information
  - Is this information you are reading supported by facts and not based on someone's opinion? This is important to find unbiased research when looking for good health information.
- Check bottom of webpage for dates, sponsors, crediting, and other details
  - If a website has not been updated in the past 5 years it may not be maintained, or the organization no longer exists. The date may be listed as a "Copyright" "©"or "page last updated on…".
  - Check the sponsors listed at the bottom of the page. Do they link to actual organizations that are trusted?

Domain differences – this helps you get an idea of the type of business the website is from.

- .com - most likely owned by commercial business
- .gov - government owned website
- .org - most likely owned by non-profit organization
- .edu - owned by school

Compare websites for credibility

Let's look deeper into webpages to check for credibility. Based on what we just talked about – looking at the "About Us" section, looking for unbiased information, and checking the bottom of the website for sources, dates and other details we will compare two websites to see which one is a better resource.

Keep in mind credible things to look for:

- Medical providers writing articles about topics in their practice. A foot doctor should be writing about information related to the foot, not the brain.
- Does the site provide contact information? It may be listed clearly at the bottom of the page with a physical address and links to connect. Others may have a contact us page.
- Is the information clear, straight forward and not hidden?
- Who reviews the content? "Board of Directors" "MD, DO, PhD" vs "medical experts"
- Is the information based on credible research findings?
- Privacy policy – do they share your information or not? If it says "your email will be shared with third party vendors", that means your information will be shared and you could receive multiple spam emails.

Be cautious of:

- Certain brand names or products being credited. The website may be trying to sell you on something.
- Content reviewed by "medical experts". Anyone can claim they are an expert.
- Opinion-based information (based on someone's opinion). Look for red flag words "I think" "We believe" "I feel".

(Have participants pair up with another participant. Have them click on the orange button links to health.com and medlineplus.gov and compare the websites. Have the group navigate through About Us, last updated, source, etc. Give them 5 minutes to compare websites and discuss what was found as a group, after the 5 minutes.)

What did you find on **health.com**?

- Hard to find the "About Us" section. It is at the bottom of the page.
  - The "About Us" page information is very vague and does not support the work of medical professionals. The "original content" is from doctors, patients, those in health, but then the editors and journalist finalize the materials.
- There is a lot of content on the page and takes a long time to load.
- There are a lot of advertisements and some advertisements are far-fetched and not related to health.
- The bottom of the page says the website is up-to-date ©2019
- The page is supported by Meredith Health Group. The name does not link out to a webpage. When you search Meredith Health Group you find that the company is a marketing and media company.
- Health.com is a magazine and they are trying to sell you a subscription.

What did you find on **medlineplus.gov**?

- The "About Us" is right at the top of the page.
  - The provide organized and detailed information about where the content comes from/reviewed by and who supports the website – it is a service of the National Libraries of Medicine, the world's largest medical library.
  - Shows awards and recognitions.
  - Does not endorse any companies or products.
  - The link "Review and Update of Content on MedlinePlus" gives a lot of information specific to the topics listed on the page and when the information comes from.
- The date provided at the bottom of the homepage gives a month, day and year. They review and update the website daily.
- There is nothing far-fetched on the website.
- It is easy to navigate and find sources.
- MedlinePlus.gov is one of the best online health websites.

Websites to Visit for Health Information

Now that we know how to review a webpage and check for credibility, we are going to talk about the websites recommended to find reliable health information.

The website lists multiple sections, based on the level of terminology used on the website. We will only review the first two sections. The last two sections are for people in the health care profession or going to school for health. The terminology and information is more advanced and the last section has resources that may cost you money to read their articles. They are listed on the site to show you how websites can be different.

Let's look at the first section. Basic consumer health information. This is for the every-day patient and a good starting point for finding health information. The websites have less technical terminology.

(*Explain what each website is to the participants. They can follow along by clicking on the hyperlink but do not spend too much time on the sites. Encourage the participants to look at the websites in detail at a later time*.)

- **medlineplus.gov** – provides general health information on different health topics, drugs and supplements (including complementary and alternative medicine) and health videos.
- **cdc.gov** – stands for Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Provides good health facts and figures on a national and global level.
- **mayoclinic.org/patient-care-and-health-information** – provides general health information on different health topics. Mayo Clinic is a top rated healthcare system in the world. Make sure you read information from the "Patient Care and Health Information" section. There website also provides information for medical professionals.
- **familydoctor.org** – similar to medlineplus.gov. It provides general health information on different health topics
- **healthline.com** – a commercial website, so the layout is busy and has more ads. But the content is credible and reviewed by medical professionals. It is user preference. There is a good symptoms checker on the website. This is comparable to webmd.com.
- **pillbox.nlm.nih.gov** – provides information about prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
- **healthcare.gov** – website to sign up for health insurance through the Marketplace.
- **medicare.gov** – official website for Medicare health insurance. For anyone with Medicare in the United States.
- **mlanet.org/page/top-health-websites** – a list of top health websites recommended by the Medical Library Association. The websites are listed by health topic/category.

For people living in Wisconsin (*please update the websites based on state presenting*):

- **badgerlink.dpi.wi.gov** – Wisconsin's online library. More than just health information. Information about schooling, getting GED, housing, finances, and other services and resources specific to people living in Wisconsin.
- **dhs.wisconsin.gov/medicaid** – website for people living in Wisconsin with Medicaid health insurance (insurance provided by the government).
- **patientpartnerships.org** – patient advocate website. For patients with questions about the healthcare system, how to communicate with a doctor, financial questions, legal questions. This is a free service to help patients.

Advanced information for medical professionals or health learners – moderately technical terminology, more detailed

- nih.gov
- nia.nih.gov
- healthreach.nlm.nih.gov
- ahrq.gov
- cdc.gov/heartdisease/materials_for_professionals

Medical research and journals – very technical terminology, used in medical and academic settings, often not available to public, cost to access

- med.wisc.edu/research
- aafp.org/home
- ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed
- mayoclinic.org/medical-professionals
- amjmed.com

What about Wikipedia?

- An online encyclopedia in multiple languages. The website can be edited by anyone at any time, there are reviewers that correct false/absurd information.
- Can be an okay source to get a general idea. You should double check your findings with a website from the recommended list above.
- Some Wikipedia articles include a message warning users that there are disagreements on some of the content, or that the content may be outdated.

Websites to search for recommendations

You may be looking for a new doctor, caregiver, health insurance or need to find another service. Here are websites that show reviews, customer feedback, and finder tools:

- healthgrades.com - healthcare rating website to find doctor or hospital. This website is nice because you can search based on where the doctor or hospital is located and if they accept your insurance. The website uses hospital data, patient surveys, and ratings to rank doctors and hospitals.
- care.com - website to find caregiver, child care, home cleaning. This website is a fee-for-service website where you will need to pay for an account.
- medlineplus.gov/directories - list of websites to find different health services. It is a big list of services separated by different health topics and categories.

Keep in mind, when starting a new service, try to find as many reviews as possible and do your research. Any service can get negative reviews. That is completely normal. You need to review, compare and use your judgment.

Evaluate Sources

Now we are going talk about how to evaluate a website. This is similar to what we did to check from credibility, but we are going to ask more questions and research a website.

Here are some questions to ask:

- Who is providing the information?
- Why did they create site?
- Who is the site for? And what do they want from you?
- Do they want personal information? If so, what will they do with it?
- Who is paying for the site?
- Is the information up-to-date?
- Are statements/claims unbelievable?

We will be using the checklist in your handouts, adapted from the National Libraries of Medicines Web Eval Checklist, to do a complete evaluation of the website familydoctor.org.

(*Show participants where the checklist is – on the back on the handout with the computer image. Have participants get in to groups of 4-5 so everyone can take a section of the checklist. Have them answer the questions on the checklist while review familydoctor.org and share answers as a group. Do as time allows, based on workshop length.*)

Finding sites in other languages (show them sites available)

There are websites that provides health information in multiple languages. Two great resources are: https://medlineplus.gov/languages/languages.html

https://www.medicare.gov/about-us/other-languages/information-in-other-languages.html

MedlinePlus.gov provides pdf resources on different health topics in over 48 different languages. The website can also be translated into Spanish.

Medicare.gov provides pdf resources on Medicare services in multiple languages.

(*Give participants time to look at the websites.*)

Differences between using a computer or mobile device

Both devices have their pros and cons. If you are looking for information right away and have a smartphone or tablet you can search using Wi-Fi or a data plan. This can be very convenient.

The biggest difference is the screen size. Mobile devices are smaller and may have less content on certain websites to make them mobile/user friendly. If a website is not mobile friendly this can make it hard to search and read the website.

Typing on a mobile screen can also be hard and take more time that using a keyboard.

If you are going to do a lot of research, it is recommended to use a computer/desktop device. This gives you more screen space, less work scrolling and easier to use for your research.

(*Read program list comparing the two devices.*)
Mobile device (phone or tablet):
- smaller screen
- less visuals and text
- drop-down icon
- easier to access and take with you
- takes longer to scroll through information
- may lose track of place on webpage when clicking on new pages or hyperlinks

Computer device (desktop or laptop):
- larger screen
- full page views making it easier to see more information at a time
- more navigation tools and tabbed selection bar
- usually more visuals and information
- easier to search and scroll through information on webpage

Local places to use the internet

Internet is not always available or may not have good service, especially in rural areas.

Mobile devices can be helpful, if you do not have Wi-Fi but have smart phone data to access the internet. If you do not have data you could use your smartphone, tablet or laptop at a business that has free Wi-Fi. Make sure you use the secure Wi-Fi from the business and not a random Wi-Fi.

Areas in your community that may have free access to the internet (*try to locate areas specific to the workshop location and provide examples for participants.)*

- Library
- Hospital (usually have a computer in the commons area for public or have medical library)
- County health departments
- Community centers or senior centers
- Students have access to school computers and school library computers

Other online resources

There are many technology tools and additional resources you can use in addition to the search engines and websites we discussed today.

If you have a device that lets you talk to Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant, you can ask questions about health topics– it is like searching "Google". For example, I could ask Alexa, "What does a co-pay mean?"

Health Portals
You can use health portals through your healthcare providers. This is something you would need to talk about with your doctor, nurse or other staff member at a hospital or clinic. The health portal allows you to:

- See after visit summaries
- Look at your list of medications
- Communicate with different providers
- Request prescriptions
- Look at a library of health news and topics
- Other features

Wearables

Wearables are electronic devices you put on your body, like a watch or belt clip, to track your health vitals, such as heart rate, steps walked or run, and sleep pattern. You can connect your wearable to an app on your mobile device and do different tracking of health conditions such as diet and exercise.

Apps

Provide online resources for mobile devices. You can download apps on your mobile device that are easy to use. Some examples are: Mayo Clinic, Medicare "What's Covered", or you could look for your health insurance provider to see if they have an app (like "Atena").

The National Libraries of Medicine (NLM) has a mobile friendly resource page that shows you websites and apps that work good on your mobile device: nlm.nih.gov/mobile

Sign-up for newsletters

If you are looking for a printed or e-mail version of information you can sign up for reliable health news by subscribing to newsletters.

- Some are free
- Can be age and gender specific

Example: on medlineplus.gov you can subscribe to a newsletter or get the NIH MedlinePlus Magazine.

Thank you for coming to the presentation today and learning about the many different health resources available online.