A Critical Analysis of Online Patient Education Resources Geared towards Self-Management for People living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

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Introduction

Daily, Canadians search the internet for information about health issues including living with chronic diseases such as COPD. However, there is limited knowledge about the quality of this information including online patient education material.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate online patient education material geared towards self-management for people living with COPD.
Methods

Following an established method of website evaluation\(^1\), an online search was conducted using Google with the following search terms:

**COPD**
**COPD + self-care**
**COPD + health information**
**COPD + disease management**

20 Websites were then evaluated using the CRAAP\(^2\) and DISCERN\(^3\) tools. These websites included:

- 7 associations/foundations
- 4 governmental websites
- 9 “other” websites

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*Figure 1: The CRAAP test*

*Figure 2: DISCERN tool, section 2 of 3*
Conclusions

- The evaluated websites often contain reliable, unbiased information, but many fail to identify their aims, refer to areas of uncertainty or provide scientific evidence.
- Using the DISCERN tool and the CRAAP test, we have determined that Wikipedia, WebMD and Mayo Clinic have the most comprehensive and patient-focused information available at this time.

Physiotherapists should be cognizant of the varying quality levels of online resources available and how the available information can change over time and provide guidance to patients on how to identify quality online patient education resources.
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3- Kaicker, J., Debono, V. B., Dang, W., Buckley, N., & Thabane, L. (2010). Assessment of the quality and variability of health information on chronic pain websites using the DISCERN instrument. BMC medicine, 8(1), 59.


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