



Powerful Healthcare Marketing Communications Solutions

Dr. Web Makes Many Americans Question Trusted Health Providers

Although trust in medical professionals remains strong, 85.6 million U.S. adults have doubted their opinion or diagnosis when it conflicts with information found on the Internet

Hispanics most likely to rely on friends and family

New York, N.Y. – July 30, 2008 – Thirty-eight percent of U.S. adults (or 85.6 million people) say they have doubted a medical professional's opinion or diagnosis because it conflicted with information they found online. However, despite the growing power of the Internet, the majority of Americans still view health providers as their most trusted source of medical information.

In contrast, Hispanics were significantly less likely to trust healthcare providers first, choosing to speak to family, friends and significant others more than other races.

This research, commissioned by healthcare marketing communications consultancy Envision Solutions, represents the first in a series of studies examining how Americans are using various interactive technologies, including the Internet, for health. To download a summary of the survey results, please go to www.envisionsolutionsnow.com/healthtrust.html.

Additional Study Highlights

- **Young Most Likely To Be Skeptical Of Medical Advice:** Over four in ten (43%) Americans ages 18 to 34 said they doubted their health provider's advice when it conflicted with online sources.
- **Hispanics Least Likely To Rely On Traditional Authority Figures:** Only 34% of Hispanics said they would consult their primary health provider first if they were diagnosed with a medical condition versus 62% of whites and 61% of African-Americans.
- **Once Trusted Institutions Receive Low Marks:** Overall, very few Americans listed institutions such as government, the media and non-profits as highly credible health information sources.

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- **Besides The Young, Most Do Not View Patient-Generated Content As Credible:** Despite its increasing popularity, only 3% of Americans seeking advice about how to manage a serious medical condition would view patient developed online health information as trustworthy. The same amount (3%) feel this way about mild medical problems. However, 9% of 18-24 year olds are happy to rely on this type of content for guidance on mild health conditions.
- **While Trust In Internet Resources Lags, Provider-Generated Online Content May Be Different:** Previous research indicates that trust in Internet resources is not widespread.¹ However, this study suggests credibility may be influenced by who is authoring the content. Thirteen percent of Americans say they would consult medical professional-developed information posted on blogs, online forums or other Websites first if they believed they had a health condition or disease.

Implications

This study reveals that most adult Americans instinctually trust health providers. However, increasingly, they are using online information to critically evaluate medical advice. It also suggests that trust in government and non-profits has significantly eroded. Finally, health communicators and marketers should resist overestimating the impact of patient-generated online content on medical decision-making.

About This Research

Kelton Research, a leading polling firm, conducted a nationally representative online survey of 1,000 U.S. adults (18+) on behalf of Envision Solutions from July 17 – 21, 2008. This study has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points.

About Envision Solutions

Envision Solutions, LLC is a full-service healthcare marketing communications consulting firm. Our core competencies are in the areas of analysis, strategic and tactical recommendation development, training and content development. Please visit www.envisionsolutionsnow.com for more information about the firm.

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¹ iCrossing, "How America Searches: Health and Wellness", January 2008