

The Top Ten Canadian Consumer Health Websites

Background:

Consumers have a great thirst for health information and value the convenience of accessing it on the Internet. A 2004 Canadian Internet Project survey of 3,000 Canadians found that 54.4% of respondents searched for health information and spent 59 minutes per week on this activity. **(1)** A 2005 Pew Internet & American Life Project poll of 914 American adults found that: “Eight in ten internet users have looked online for information on at least one of 16 health topics, with increased interest since 2002 in diet, fitness, drugs, health insurance, experimental treatments, and particular doctors and hospitals.” **(2)**

However most consumers use a general search engine, such as Google and type in keywords, to locate health information because they are not aware of a specific health portal or website. Furthermore, consumers seeking health information on topics where Canadian content is important, have difficulty in locating this. Information providers who assist consumers seeking health information have the knowledge and skills to produce a list of recommended websites

The Consumer and Patient Health Information Section (CAPHIS) of the Medical Library Association (MLA) pioneered a “Top 100” list to provide CAPHIS members and other librarians with a resource to use in their daily practice and teaching. Sites are evaluated based on the following criteria: credibility, sponsorship/ authorship, content, audience, currency, disclosure, purpose, links, design, interactivity, and disclaimers. **(3)** The “Top 100” list expands upon the MLA Top Ten List. **(4)** While the CAPHIS list is extremely valuable, it does not include any Canadian sites.

At CHLA/ABSC 2005, Dean Giustini (Co-Chair of CHLA/ABSC 2006) approached Susan Murray, Consumer Health Information Service (CHIS), about having CHIS put together a list of the top ten Canadian websites for consumers. Susan thought that this was more suited as a project surveying other librarians for their suggestions and would be a good collaborative activity for the Consumer Health Information Providers Group (CHIPIG).

Purpose:

- To provide consumers and health intermediaries with a list of quality Canadian health websites.
- This will be of value to recommend to consumers as a good starting point for quality health information with a Canadian focus, as well as to health intermediaries. It could also be used to publicize quality Canadian consumer health sites in the media.

Method:

- A Subcommittee of CHIPIG was struck to develop a survey using Survey Monkey to gather suggestions from health sciences, public librarians and health promoters
- In April 2006, messages were posted on librarian and health promotion listservs, such as CANMEDLIB, THLA, CHIPIG, CASLIS, OPLA, and Click4Health.

Criteria:

- Canadian
- Consumer focus
- Credibility, sponsorship/authorship, content, audience, currency, disclosure, purpose, links, design, interactivity, and disclaimers (CAPHIS's criteria)

Results:

- approximately 50 responses to the survey
- another 20 responses received as e-mails

Top Ten List:

1. Canadian Health Network <http://www.canadian-health-network.ca/>
2. Women's Health Matters <http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca>
3. Dietitians of Canada <http://www.dietitians.ca>
4. Canada Health Portal http://chp-pcs.gc.ca/CHP/index_e.jsp
5. Health Care Information Resources <http://hsl.mcmaster.ca/tomflem/top.html>
6. sexualityandu.ca <http://www.sexualityandu.ca/>
7. AboutKidsHealth <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/>
8. Passeporte Santé <http://www.passeportsante.net/>
9. Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario) <http://www.ontario.cmha.ca/>
10. BC Health Guide <http://bchealthguide.org/>

Subcommittee Members:

Susan Murray	Kim Meighan
Jean Williams	Elsie Petch
Michelle Arbuckle	Elizabeth Puckering
Dean Giustini (Honorary)	

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References:

1. Canadian Internet Project <http://www.cipic.ca/en/intro.htm>
2. Fox, Susannah. Health Information Online Pew Internet & American Life Project. May 15, 2005. http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Healthtopics_May05.pdf
3. Consumer and Patient Health Information Section. Web Sites You Can Trust: The CAPHIS Top 100 List. : <http://caphis.mlanet.org/consumer/index.html>
4. Medical Library Association. "Top Ten" Most Useful Websites. <http://www.mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/topten.html>

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