

YouTube airs medical help videos

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A number of people -- from Canada to the Netherlands -- without formal medical training are sharing health advice on the U.S. video-sharing Web site YouTube.

Some, such as Vancouver, Canada-based comedian David Milchard said his skit on testicular cancer was based on a visit to the doctor, NewScientist.com said.

An Amsterdam, Netherlands, comedy troupe said it wanted to encourage women to do a monthly self-exam for breast cancer by putting the message to a popular hip-hop song.

Not all of YouTube's medical clips come from non-medicos. A government-funded clinic in Builth Wells, Wales, posted videos of nurses showing how to sample blood sugar levels and use an inhaler, the report said.

"It's an idea I would have thought drug companies would have done themselves," Richard Walters, a clinic doctor, said. "But they haven't, so we did."

The visual element of YouTube makes it easier to explain treatments and interventions that are difficult to describe in other Web-based formats such as discussion groups, one poster said.

While the informational videos fulfill a need, medical experts warn against using YouTube as a replacement for professional guidance.

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