

# Patients need more guidance on chemo web information

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(Medical Xpress) -- Doctors and nurses may be underestimating the value placed on internet chemotherapy information by cancer patients and missing out on opportunities to discuss this information with them, new research finds today.

A study about the impact of internet [chemotherapy](#) information, published in the [British Journal of Cancer](#), found that only a small proportion of [health professionals](#) routinely recommended websites unless specifically requested by [patients](#).

The study, carried out at Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust, questioned 204 patients who were having chemotherapy.

Around half of the patients received online information about their treatment – and 81 per cent these said that health professionals rarely recommended websites to them.

The study also showed that more than half of the patients receiving internet chemotherapy information said they needed further guidance and wanted to have the opportunity for discussion with health professionals. But most did not have the opportunity to do so.

The study results showed that patients placed the most importance on chemotherapy information gained from health professionals, pre-printed hospital leaflets and the internet.

Cancer Research UK's main website and its patient information site CancerHelp UK were two of the five websites mentioned by patients in the study results.

Elaine Davies, study author based at Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust, said: "Health professionals need to determine what information patients are most interested in and how they can offer guidance to credible websites.

"It's undeniable that reliable information can improve patients' understanding of chemotherapy and can be a good way of tailoring consultations to address the individual needs of a patient."

Dr Kheng-Wei Yeoh, another study author based at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals Trust, said: "Discussion of internet chemotherapy information could in fact be an opportunity to strengthen this relationship by clearing up any concerns, relieving anxiety and helping to make difficult decisions."

The researchers said that since the role of internet information is likely to grow in the future, it is vital that patients have access to good quality and accurate information.

One way of doing this, the study suggested, was to involve health professionals in the regulation and peer review of websites.

Liz Woolf, head of CancerHelp UK at Cancer Research UK, said: "Cancer is a complex and emotive subject and it can be daunting for patients who understandably will have a lot questions. CancerHelp UK is easy to access, written in simple language, peer-reviewed by cancer experts and allows patients to take in information at their own pace.

"We know how important reliable information is to patients – for the

past 10 years Cancer Research UK has been involved in programmes to ensure quality. In 2009, CancerHelp UK and Cancer Research UK's health information leaflets were awarded the Information Standard, the Department of Health's accreditation scheme for information quality.

“In addition, the Department of Health Information Prescriptions programme is now providing reliable information, including [Cancer Research UK's](#), to patients within the NHS.”

**More information:** Davies E and Yeoh KW, Internet chemotherapy information: impact on patients and health professionals *British Journal of Cancer* (2012)

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Provided by Cancer Research UK

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