

# Psychologists aim to help Dr Google

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Psychologists are to improve online health information on lung cancer after research showed that family members are more likely to search online to encourage loved ones to seek help.

This is one of the outcomes from research by PhD student Julia Mueller based in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work at The University of Manchester (part of the Manchester Cancer Research Centre) who will present her study today, Thursday 7 May 2015, at the Annual Conference of the British Psychology Society being held in Liverpool.

Julia Mueller said: "People displaying symptoms of [lung cancer](#) often don't seek [medical diagnosis](#) for several months, which can affect their recovery or even their survival. Online health information could be a key factor influencing their decision to seek medical help. This study explored whether those with suspected lung cancer researched symptoms online prior to diagnosis and if this impacted on help-seeking behaviour."

Some 120 patients recently diagnosed with lung cancer (within six months) completed questionnaires, with a further 24 taking part in interviews.

The results showed that only 2 per cent patients had researched their own symptoms online, while 18 per cent reported a relative had done this on their behalf. Relatives used the information to encourage the patients to seek further medical diagnosis and to check doctor's advice. However,

most encountered problems retrieving and assessing online information.

Julia Mueller said: "Our findings highlight the importance of relatives in triggering help-seeking for lung cancer symptoms and that online information contributes to this process. Being able to easily access appropriate information online could be crucial in getting people to the doctor earlier - which will improve recovery and survival rates.

"We plan to develop and evaluate a website that will provide information for those experiencing lung cancer [symptoms](#) that have not gone to their doctor for a diagnosis. This will involve tailoring [information](#) to the individuals own circumstances, such as age and gender, and whether they are searching for themselves or behalf of someone else."

**More information:** Poster presentation: "Information-seeking behaviour in people with lung cancer and the World Wide Web: Does Dr Google promote early help" The British Psychological Society annual conference is from 5 - 7 May 2015 at the Arena and Convention Centre (ACC) Liverpool, L3 4FP.

Provided by British Psychological Society

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