

Cancer patients share web info with docs for insight, advice

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They are not typically challenging their treatments, study found.

(HealthDay) -- Cancer patients' primary goal in talking with their doctors about information they've found on the Internet is to get more insight and advice on the online information, new research indicates.

"It seems that patients were not necessarily trying to influence their doctors, but rather they wanted to better understand their options," study author Christina Sabee, an associate professor of [communication studies](#) at San Francisco State University, said in a *Journal of Applied Communication Research* news release.

Sabee and her colleagues examined responses to online [questionnaires](#) completed by 145 [cancer patients](#) and [caregivers](#) from three online cancer communities and found that only 13 percent discussed online information with their doctors to test the doctor's knowledge or find out why the doctor's advice differed from online information.

Thirty-seven percent of participants said they discussed online information with their doctor to learn more about a condition or treatment, 19 percent wanted the doctor's opinion or advice, and 10 percent wanted their doctor to verify the accuracy of the online information.

The study also found that 13 percent of patients wanted to show their doctor they were taking an active role in treatment or being a "good patient." Some of these patients felt that their doctors had strict ideas about treatment and were unwilling to consider other options.

It's important for doctors to recognize these patients, Sabeel said.

"Patients who discuss Internet [health information](#) to show that they are a 'good' patient, or to express competence and knowledge about their illness, may respond poorly to a stark criticism of their Internet research or a refusal to support certain options," she explained.

When a patient wants to talk about online information, doctors could respond by asking the patient what led them to bring up this information, Sabeel suggested. Doing so could encourage [positive feelings](#) in patients and lead to better health.

The study was published online May 23 and will appear in the August print issue of the journal.

More information: The American Cancer Society has more about [cancer information on the Internet](#).

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