MEDINFO 2007
HISA Ltd Australia
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Utility of Search Strategies Used by Nurses Seeking Internet-Based Health Information

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Abstract

Understanding the search mechanisms associated with using the Internet to locate health information is essential to improve health care information seeking behaviors of both nurses and their patients.

An observational descriptive cross-sectional study design was used to evaluate the strategies nurses use to search for health-related information on the Internet. There was little variability in the sample.

Keywords:

information seeking, internet, health information, nurse

Introduction

The objective of this study was to determine the utility of clinical nurses' search strategies to obtain healthcare information on the Internet. The aim was to establish if there are successful patterns that can be documented and taught to others.

Methods

An observational descriptive cross-sectional study design was used to evaluate the strategies nurses use to search for health-related information on the Internet at one major east coast school of nursing in the Fall of 2005. The convenience sample of 216 subjects searched for data surrounding a specific healthcare related scenario, then reported their satisfaction with the results of their search and answered some disease specific questions using a questionnaire. Data about search strategies used was collected automatically using Spector Corporate Network Edition (Spector CNE) software. Descriptive statistics and linear and logistical regressions were used to examine the hypotheses.

Results

The number of links used by the participants was significantly related to the search time (more time used more links). The group with less effective scored searches tended to use more links than those with effective searches. Low computer experience tended to predict the number of links used.

Discussion

There are many implications for nurses in clinical practice, education, research, and administration.

- Clinical Nurses need to know most efficient and effective ways to search for healthcare information on the www.
- Will access to online information provide a better quality of patient care?
- Do nurses need access to the www whilst at work?
- CE courses should be conducted to enhance information seeking skills.
- Journal clubs can be created to stimulate the integration of Evidence-based practice.
- Learning styles
- Nurses need skills for searching for and judging the quality of online information sources.
- Basic computer skills and computer literacy is needed by all nurses.

Conclusions

More investigation is needed in order to be able to determine the utility of clinical nurses' search strategies to obtain healthcare information on the Internet. The study conclusions offer suggestions for future study.