

# ***HEALTH CARE***

## **NEWS AND INFORMATION**

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*Health Care: News and Information* is a service of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) to help our readers stay fully informed about the latest health care issues as we work to advance a high-quality health care system.

Jim Edwards, Editor

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## **Study: Health Information Online Needs Work**

**Health care leaders want to see the development of a robust, interoperable health information system. While progress is being made toward this in the health care system, there's are potential hazards on the information superhighway.**

- A recent report found problems in the information that consumers find if they simply “Google” for health information.
- The Center for Medicine in the Public Interest produced the study, titled “Insta Americans: The Empowered (and Imperiled) Healthcare Consumer in the Age of Internet Medicine.”
- Researchers examined the results of Google searches about common cholesterol treatment and a diabetes medicine. They focused on the first three pages of search results.
- What's essential is an interoperable HIT system to enable stronger lifelines from doctor-to-doctor and doctor-to-patient.

**Health information that search engines currently pull up isn't always of the highest quality. It needs vetting for reliability and accuracy.**

- Just “Googling” to find out more about what's ailing you may lead consumers down the wrong road. Consumers must use discretion about whatever they may find on the Internet.
- There's about as much law as medicine being peddled on the web in the name of health care consumer information. About half of the first three pages of Google results led people to lawyers and attorneys seeking plaintiffs.
- Researchers found almost two-thirds of the first three pages of search results were from biased websites or offered unverified information.
- The popular search engine didn't pull up any professional medical organization sources or government webpages.

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- “People trust, and make decisions, based on the information they find online,” CMPI Vice President Robert Goldberg said. “With few exceptions, the information we found appeared legitimate but had no medical authority whatsoever. In many cases, we found lawyers posing as medical experts.”

**Health information technology is slowly but surely proceeding. But the sooner a robust system that allows interoperability comes, it will help improve the situation. Right now, patients and consumers may rely on less than credible health information they find on the web, depending on the legitimacy of the source. The goal is an HIT system that empowers doctors and providers to communicate electronically and share secure, digitized information, and that enables patients and providers to interact electronically. This electronic lifeline will raise the quality of health information in individual cases and provide guidance from trusted, credible sources.**

*The Healthcare Leadership Council, representing the innovators in each sector of the health care industry, is committed to advancing a market-based health care system that values innovation and provides affordable, high-quality care.*

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