

**[P05.009] Parkinson's Disease on the Internet: An Evaluation of the Readability, Quality, and Technical Content of Patient Information**

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**OBJECTIVE:** To evaluate patient information on the internet about Parkinson's disease (PD), as discovered through popular search engines. **BACKGROUND:** As the use of the internet to access medical information becomes increasingly more popular and common, online patient-accessible health information requires critical evaluation. While there are no standardized tools for this purpose, general quality principles have been previously proposed. Evaluation of PD websites has not been performed. **DESIGN/METHODS:** The term "Parkinson's disease" was entered in the most popular internet search engines (Google, Yahoo, AOL, MSN, Ask Jeeves). The first 20 non-sponsored links from each engine were compiled, resulting in 35 unique websites; of those, 27 provided original educational content. Websites were rated by one reviewer using the following pre-defined criteria: readability (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score, ideally 8<sup>th</sup> grade or lower), overall website quality (Sandvik adaptation of the Health on the Net (HON) Foundation Code), and quality of technical information (adapted PD-specific scale), with a composite score for each site. **RESULTS:** Searches yielded an average of  $10.5 \times 10^6$  (SD  $13.4 \times 10^6$ ) results. Identifiable sponsors included 9 biomedical information companies (33%), 8 PD organizations (30%), 3 general information companies (11%), 3 hospital systems (11%), and 2 commercial sponsors (7.4%). Average composite score was 33.3 (max 46, range 17-41, SD 6.5). Sites scored highest in accuracy and symptom/treatment summaries, and lowest in readability (average grade 12.6, range 9.3-19.3, SD 2.4) and documentation of authorship/source material. Organizations were less likely to reference authorship and currency of source material compared to biomedical sites ( $p=0.01$ ). Neither HON-certification or absence of advertising predicted higher scores. **CONCLUSIONS/RELEVANCE:** Readability levels of easily located PD websites were too advanced for education of the general public. While more accurate and detailed in technical content, compliance with HON quality standards was less stringent. Online patient resources for PD require revision for compliance with ideal standards of health information quality.