

## Beyond an Apple a Day: Providing Consumer Health Information at Your Library

Two-Part Webinar Series



National Network of Libraries of Medicine,  
South Central Region and TSLAC

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### Part 1- April 15

- Evolution of Consumer Health and e-patients
- Role of the Librarian in Consumer Health
- Consumer Health and the Reference Interview
- Consumer Health Resources: an Introduction to MedlinePlus.gov

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### Consumer Health – then and now...

- Before 1972, doctors told patients what they wanted patients to know, and what they wanted patients to do.
- 1972 – *AHA Patient Bill of Rights*
  - “The patient has the right and is encouraged to obtain from physicians and other direct caregivers relevant, current, and understandable information about his or her diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis.”

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## Realities of Health Care today

- Patients are now asked to make decisions about their own disease process.
- Most patients do not have the tools to make these kinds of decisions




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## What's an e-patient?

- "...individuals who are equipped, enabled, empowered and engaged in their health and health care decisions." [Ferguson]
- "... new breed of informed health consumers, using the Internet to gather information about a medical condition of particular interest to them." [Wikipedia]

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## Consumer Health on the Web

- Pew Internet and American Life Project
  - 61% of American adults look online for health information
  - 80% of US Internet users have searched for information on at least one health topic
  - 52% of searches on the Internet are on behalf of someone else
  - 60% of e-patients say they (or someone they know) has been helped by following medical advice or health information from the Internet
  - 66% started at a search engine for their most recent inquiry

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## Consumer Health on the Web

□ Pew Internet and American Life Project

■ BUT ...

Only one quarter of online health seekers said they always or usually check the source and date of health information online!

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## Role of the Librarian

□ What is the role of the librarian in helping people find the information they need to make good decisions about their health?



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## Health Literacy

□ "The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions" [*Healthy People 2010*]



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### Why is Health Literacy Important?

- To fill out a patient information form
- To understand health-related instructions
- To follow discharge instructions
- To identify signs
- To keep appointments
- To understand insurance
- To sign consent forms



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### Issues in Reference



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### The Reference Interview in the context of health information

- What are these patrons really looking for?
  - Sick lick vomiting
    - Cyclic vomiting
  - Dropped Bladder
    - Cystocele
  - Fireballs in the Eucharist
    - Fibroids in the uterus
  - Smiling Mighty Jesus
    - Spinal Meningitis

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## The Reference Interview

...in the context of health information

- Be empathetic
- Be an active listener
- Use open ended questions
- Respect privacy / confidentiality
- Be prepared for emotions
- Be aware of body language



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## The Reference Interview

- Language and cultural barriers pose special problems
- Know the limits of your collection
- Do not offer personal experiences
- Know where you can refer your patrons
  
- Others?

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## Consumer Health Resources

- An Introduction to MedlinePlus.gov
  - <http://www.medlineplus.gov>
  - Designed for patients and their families and friends
  - 900+ Health Topics: including Diseases, Illnesses, Health Conditions and Wellness Issues
  - Drugs and Supplements
  - Videos and Cool Tools
  - English, Spanish, and more!



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## Until next time...

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- ▣ Exercises
- ▣ Questions
- ▣ Contact me:
  - Cheryl Rowan, Consumer Health Coordinator
  - NN/LM SCR <http://www.nlm.gov/scr/>
  - [cheryl.rowan@exch.library.tmc.edu](mailto:cheryl.rowan@exch.library.tmc.edu)



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