NAVIGATING CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION

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OBJECTIVES

- Define "consumer health"

- Learn about reliable, freely available consumer health resources

- Discover how to evaluate health information and resources

- Understand how to locate scholarly articles

- Identify current information regarding public health concerns

WHAT IS CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION?

CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION IS…

- Information that is easily understood by the general population (consumers of health products and services)

- Written using simple language (at an elementary or early middle school reading level)

- Freely available via the Internet

CONSUMER HEALTH RESOURCES

MEDLINE PLUS

- Can be accessed at https://medlineplus.gov/
- Created by the National Library of Medicine
- Information is directed towards the consumer
- Can browse by topic, or conduct a basic search
- Website and some materials available in Spanish and other languages

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND INTEGRATIVE HEALTH

- https://www.nccih.nih.gov/

- Provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (NIH)

- Information regarding "complementary health products and practices"

- Health topics, herb information, general information

MAYO CLINIC

- https://www.mayoclinic.org/
- Contains general health information at a consumer level
- Basic search available, or browse alphabetically
- Includes symptom checker, and first aid section
- Edited by Mayo Clinic physicians
- Also available in Spanish, Chinese and Arabic

DAILY MED

- https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/
- Created by the National Library of Medicine
- Contains the information provided to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) by manufacturers
- Prescription and non-prescription, as well human and animal drugs are included
- Basic and advanced search available
- Safety information (recalls) and related resources provided

DRUGS.COM

- https://www.drugs.com/

- Created by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Cerner Multum, IBM Watson Micromedex

- Search alphabetically, or with a basic or advanced search

- Contains a Pill Identifier, as well as images of the actual medication

CLINICALTRIALS.GOV

- https://clinicaltrials.gov/

- Maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine

- Contains information about closed, current, ongoing and future clinical trials

- Basic search and advanced search available

- Interface will be changing

EVALUATING HEALTH INFORMATION

BEWARE GOOGLERS

- Use the CRAP test
  - C=Currency
    - Is the information recently published?
  - R=Reliability
    - What is the type of information provided? Is it an opinion piece? Are there sources/citations listed?
  - A=Authority
    - Who is the author(s)? Do they have expertise in the field? Is it a .com website?
  - P=Purpose/Point of View
    - Is there bias? Are they trying to sell something?

A FEW EXAMPLES

- Google search for "coffee and health"
- Over 2 billion results!
  - https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/9-reasons-why-the-right-amount-of-coffee-is-good-for-you
  - https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/top-evidence-based-health-benefits-of-coffee
  - https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-coffee
  - http://coffeeandhealth.org/

LOCATING SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

PUBMED

- https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/
- Created by the National Library of Medicine
- Contains over 34 million citations
- Contains original research articles, reviews, and other types of documents
- Not written at a consumer level
- Utilizes MeSH terms
- Contains the MEDLINE database and more
- PubMed Central for Full Text
- LILRC Interlibrary Loan Service: https://lilrc.org/Interlibrary-Loan-Services

GOOGLE SCHOLAR

- https://scholar.google.com/

- An easy way to find scholarly articles

- Use the "cited by" feature for similar articles

- Basic and advanced search options

- Search filters aren't very robust

- Helpful for finding full text of a known article, or when desperate

- No vetting process---beware of unreliable sources (AKA "predatory publishers")

PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

CDC

- https://www.cdc.gov/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Contains news on current outbreaks and other public health concerns
  - COVID-19 County Check: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
  - Links to COVID Data Tracker for more detailed information
- Provides general information about health topics (searchable and browsable)
- Data & Stats especially helpful
  - https://data.cdc.gov/ for more detailed information

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- https://health.ny.gov/

- Great resource for state-level COVID-19 data

- Current information on COVID-19 vaccination, testing and treatment

- https://health.data.ny.gov/ contains state and county-level health data and statistics

CONCLUSION

A FEW LAST TAKEAWAYS…

- We are not doctors, so we do not give medical advice

- Provide the highest quality information possible by using reliable resources

- When in doubt, refer patrons to their doctor for additional information

- See the Stony Brook Medicine Health Libraries Program (HeLP) website for additional resources and webinars: https://publichealth.stonybrookmedicine.edu/healthy_libraries_program

QUESTIONS?

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