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MPH Theory & Practice Seminar How to Evaluate a Health-Related Website

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MPH Theory & Practice Seminar
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How to Evaluate a Health-Related Website

Sponsorship

The organization or individual sponsoring a website can offer an initial clue about the quality of information found on the website. Educational institutions (URLs ending with “edu” in the US and second to last as “ac” in the UK usually) or respected professional associations normally are reliable. Most, but not all, organizations (“org”) are reliable since some organizations have a narrow ideological agenda. Commercial sites (“.com”) can vary widely in quality of information.

Authority of Author

Does the website include author statements for narrative text? If so, how much of an authority does the author have on the subject?

Recency of Information

Although a homepage might indicate that some information somewhere on the site might have been updated recently, check the actual file or document for a date. That date, if it exists, will be a better indicator of recency.

Quality Controls

Has the information been peer reviewed? Does the website sponsor have corrective protocols to notify users of any erroneous information previously posted? Do texts cite authoritative sources? How complete is the information?

Privacy Protections

Does the website post any privacy policy statements?

Balance of Viewpoints

If the subject has a degree of controversy do authors acknowledge alternative views?

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

This disclosure becomes important whenever the author or sponsor has a financial interest in a service or product.

Integrity of Links

When the website lists links to other websites do those links actually work?

Copyright and Permissions

Website contents generally are copyrighted, except in the case of some government documents. Does the website make it easy for you to obtain permission to use copyrighted graphics or significant portions of a document?

For more information: Winker MA et al. Guidelines for medical and health information sites on the Internet: principles governing AMA websites. JAMA 2000 Mar 22/29; 283 (12): 1600-6.

[File: MPH t&p2008 website evaluation](#)