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Quality and usability of information available to patients in the internet on laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

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Introduction: Laparoscopic cholecystectomy is a commonly performed minimal invasive surgery. Patients' usage of internet to find information on surgery and related issues is increasing. Aim of this study is to review information available to public on internet about laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

Methods:

This study was conducted in June 2009 using Google® and Yahoo® search engines and four most popular browsers Internet explorer, Firefox, GoogleChrome and Opera. Internet was searched using the term "Laparoscopic cholecystectomy". First fifty websites in both search engines were reviewed using validated online LIDA instrument. Accessibility and usability of websites and reliability of information were given marks out of 100 according to validated criteria. Contents were assessed using structured pre-tested checklist. Data was analyzed using SPSS 15.

Results:

Google gave 24(48%) and yahoo gave 26(52%) out of first 50 websites of search results which can be used by patients. Ninety nine percent of them worked in all four browsers. Total of 50 web sites identified, belonging to Private institutions(46%), Group of physician/society(26%), government(20%) and other(8%). Fifty four percent had accessibility score between 50 -74 and 46% had more than 75.

Reliability of the content was less than 50 in 36%, 50-74 in 56% and more than 75 in 8%.

Contents mentioned in the web sites include what is cholecystectomy(84%), indications(78%), anaesthesia related details(58%), prognosis(58%), advantages(76%), Complications(92%) and other treatment options(70%).

Discussion & conclusion:

Only 50% of the web search results can be used by patients to get information on laparoscopic cholecystectomy. Contents of the web sites were satisfactory whereas reliability of information is average.

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