

Quality of information available over internet on laparoscopic cholecystectomy

Jayaweera Muhandirange Uthpala Jayaweera ¹, Merrenna Ishan Malith De Zoysa ¹

Abstract

Background: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the quality of information available on the internet to patients undergoing laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

Materials and methods: The sources of information were obtained the keyword 'laparoscopic cholecystectomy', from internet searches using Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Ask and AOL search engines with default settings. The first 50 web links were evaluated for their accessibility, usability and reliability using the LIDA tool (validation instrument for healthcare websites by Minervation). The readability of the websites was assessed by using the Flesch Reading Ease Score (FRES) and the Gunning Fog Index (GFI).

Results: Of the 250 links, 90 were new links. Others were repetitions, restricted access sites or inactive links. The websites had an average accessibility score of 52/63 (83.2%; range 40-62), a usability score of 39/54 (73.1%; range 23-49) and a reliability score of 14/27 (51.6%; range 5-24). Average FRES was 41.07 (4.3-86.4) and average GFI was 11.2 (0.6-86.4).

Discussion and conclusion: Today, most people use the internet as a convenient source of information. With regard to health issues, the information available on the internet varies greatly in accessibility, usability and reliability. Websites appearing at the top of the search results page may not be the most appropriate sites for the target audience. Generally, the websites scored low on reliability with low scores on content production and conflict-of-interest declaration. Therefore, previously evaluated references on the World Wide Web should be given to patients and caregivers to prevent them from being exposed to commercially motivated or inaccurate information.