

INFORMED CHOICE? ENGLISH- AND FRENCH-SPEAKERS' USE OF THE CANADIAN HEALTH NETWORK

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ABSTRACT

Few studies of the ways patients and consumers seek health information have investigated use of web portals or differences in French- and English-speakers' understanding and use of web-based health information. Interviews were conducted with French- and English-speaking Canadian Health Network (CHN) users to understand how this web portal fit in their practices of information seeking and use. Interviewees accessed the CHN, among other websites and non-internet resources to expand their understanding of health issues, participate more actively in their health care and support other people's understanding of health. French-speakers faced additional constraints to understanding health information as they crossed linguistic, cultural and jurisdictional boundaries on the web. This study also investigated the policy assumptions underlying the CHN through discourse analysis and a focus group with portal managers. It found the policy discourse assumed the CHN would improve access to health information and personal responsibility for health and health care decision-making.

Keywords: health information; internet; information seeking; use; health promotion; 'informed patient'

Subject Terms: internet – social aspects; health promotion; patient education; literacy; health policy Canada