Who is the Expert? Exploring Credible Sources in Healthcare
By Karine Manoukian

Resources

- Listen to: Using Web Communities to Help with Healthcare

- Explore: **A User's Guide to Finding and Evaluating Health Information on the Web**. http://www.mlanet.org/resources/userguide

- Read: http://science.kqed.org/quest/2011/07/01/diet-sodas-may-not-be-as-harmless-as-you-think/

- Read: **Don't Cross Your Eyes They'll Stay That Way And 75 Other Health Myths Busted….** http://www.businessinsider.com/busted-health-myths-2011-7

- Explore: http://www.ucsfhealth.org/education/evaluating_health_information/

- Explore: From http://health.nih.gov/topic/EvaluatingHealthInformation

- Explore: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter: http://www.wellnessletter.com/index.php

Critical Issue

The Internet has changed the way that we research information for our daily needs. Considering the wealth of resources online and the fact that anyone can publish online, when faced with a health question or problem, how does one find credible sources for support, diagnosis and/or treatment? Also the "facts" keep changing. One day we are told that a certain food is safe. The next day, we are told to avoid the same food. Which sources should we trust for wellness and healthcare advice? Who is the expert- our family, our community, our social network, our physician, or all of the above?

Pre-Listening Activity

Suggest that students work with a partner to brainstorm a list of common health problems or concerns. Invite students to share their lists with the class and create a group list on the board. Possible health concerns include ailments such as: allergies, backache, cough, dizziness, earache, fever, flu, headache, indigestion, laryngitis, nausea, sore throat, stiff neck, stomach-ache, and toothache.

Ask students to respond to the following questions:

1. Looking at the list of health concerns on the board, how would you treat each health problem? Where did you learn about recommended treatments?

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2.   How do people in your home country treat these problems?

3.   Have you ever received different types of advice for treating the same problem? How did you decide which advice to follow?

Vocabulary Building for Audio Clip

Before reading or listening to the clip, ensure students understand the following terms:

rare disease	lung collapse	to diagnose/diagnosed	procedure
tumor	lingering objections	to be grateful	to consult
kidney	benign	network	to embrace
at the last moment			

Focus Questions - Listening for Details

Read over the questions below with the students and then play the audio clip [Web Communities Help Patients With Rare Diseases](#) from 00:00 – 2:41. Ask students to listen for the answers to the questions while the clip is playing. Also consider playing the clip and pausing after the answer to each question has been given. Play the clip as many times as the students request it and discuss their answers as a whole group.

1. What two things do Carmen and Karla have in common?
2. Where does Carmen go when she has questions about LAM - lymphangioleiomyomatosis.
3. What did the member of the LAM Facebook team tell Carmen to do?
4. How does Karla's father, Marco Negrini, feel about the LAM Facebook community?
5. When was the LAM network started?

Post Listening Questions

Consider using the transcript for this portion of the lesson. Suggest students skim and scan for answers to the questions. Alternatively, the transcript could be given for homework to prepare students for the lesson.

Working in pairs or in small groups, ask students to discuss the following questions:

1.   The radio transcript/clip discusses a *rare* health issue called LAM. What is the difference between common health issues and rare health issues?

2.   In the radio clip Carmen goes to Facebook to find information on LAM. Have you used the Internet to explore health issues? Which sites do you visit?

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3. Read the following excerpt from the clip and answer the question below:

    The Web has been a game-changer for those people, connecting them to others in the same boat. They share medical information and support each other on listservs, chat rooms, and now Facebook. "We say things to each other we can't say to others," said one woman who responded to a survey on rare diseases and the Web by the Pew Internet Project."

    Why do you think patients might feel they can say things more freely on the web than in person?

4. The members of the LAM Facebook network proved to be credible and trustworthy sources when they provided the valuable information that saved Karla's kidney at the last moment.
    When searching for information online, how do you decide whether or not the source is credible?

Extension Activity

In a computer lab have students explore a common health concern such as a fever, cold, sore throat, etc. Ask them to analyze websites for credibility by responding to the following questions.

1. What draws you to a certain site?
2. Is the information on the site supported by evidence? What kind of evidence?
3. Who is the giving the health information or advice? Is it a doctor, a blogger, a social network, a university, a company i.e. an expert?
4. What is the difference between sites that end in .edu, .com, .org and .gov?

Developing Skills

In groups, ask students to develop guidelines or tips on how to find credible, reliable health information on the Internet.

Questions to consider while creating a source list:
- Who is funding the website?
- Who has an interest in the website - a pharmaceutical company, a medical community, a researcher?

Contact Assignment

Suggest that students put together a list of sites that offer general health information. Compile a resource list as a hand-out or post it on a class website.

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