



Developing and using websites:

an RCN guide to using technology to complement nursing practice





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For information

The term *health care practitioner* is used throughout this document to include all practitioners who deliver health care services across health and social care settings: *clinicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, health care support workers*.



1. Introduction: using the internet to deliver health information

Patients and service users want better information about treatment options and to be more involved in decision making. Many local health service providers are creating websites to share information and provide that support for patients. To access the good quality information online that will help patients manage their own care, health care practitioners must understand the diverse health information needs across communities.

Health care practitioners need to ensure that the websites they create bear the hallmark of good practice, and that they enhance patient education, communication and care pathways. In the development of new websites health care practitioners should always be accountable for their actions, and ensure that communication strategies are appropriate and safe.



2. Your guide to developing and using websites

The definitive guide to designing websites for health is The Judge Project, produced by Sue Childs. The Judge guide covers all aspects of web use in health from inception to execution and evaluation. The guide is free and includes four core modules that cover every aspect a health care practitioner needs to consider from website design to evaluation www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/ceis/re/isrc/themes/ibarea/jud/

The Judge Project guide

To help health care practitioners design and set up a website for patients/service users, the Judge Project guide is split into the following four modules:

1. How to produce good quality information.
2. How to design good quality websites.
3. How to market websites.
4. How to help consumers use health information.



3. The business case for setting up a web service

Health care needs and ICT are constantly changing, there will be other considerations specific to your area of practice and local community needs. A useful exercise for determining some of these needs is to prepare a business case for your new service. This may help you to underpin

the benefits of your new service to patients and decide how you will ensure continued and measured success. It may also be useful to think of how to evaluate your web service programme on an ongoing basis, including measures of patient satisfaction.



4. What kind of web service will you provide?

Before you create your web service you should decide what kind of service you want to give patients by defining what it will do. This allows you to construct the interface properly so that it is compatible with other systems. The web design definition is of vital importance because the choice will have implications for resource allocation, including clinical staff time and website IT support.

There are key personnel you will want to involve in your planning and preparation processes, including all nursing practitioners who will be involved in using the ICT, and the commercial companies providing the ICT equipment.

To ensure alignment within your local clinical team and make sure you can access the best local expertise, you should identify and contact the key people.

Refer to: *Using technology to complement nursing practice: an RCN guide for health care practitioners*, **publication code 004 228**"

The most basic design decision you will have to make is which of the two types of web services you will create:

- instant response or synchronous service
- delayed response or asynchronous service.

Instant response web service

If you set up a *synchronous* online web service, this means that there are staff available immediately to answer questions from a patient or service user.

Synchronous websites are usually commercial and charge a fee. They will also need to include kite marks such as the Care Quality Commission registration logo, which may help increase user confidence in the quality of the information.

Delayed response web service

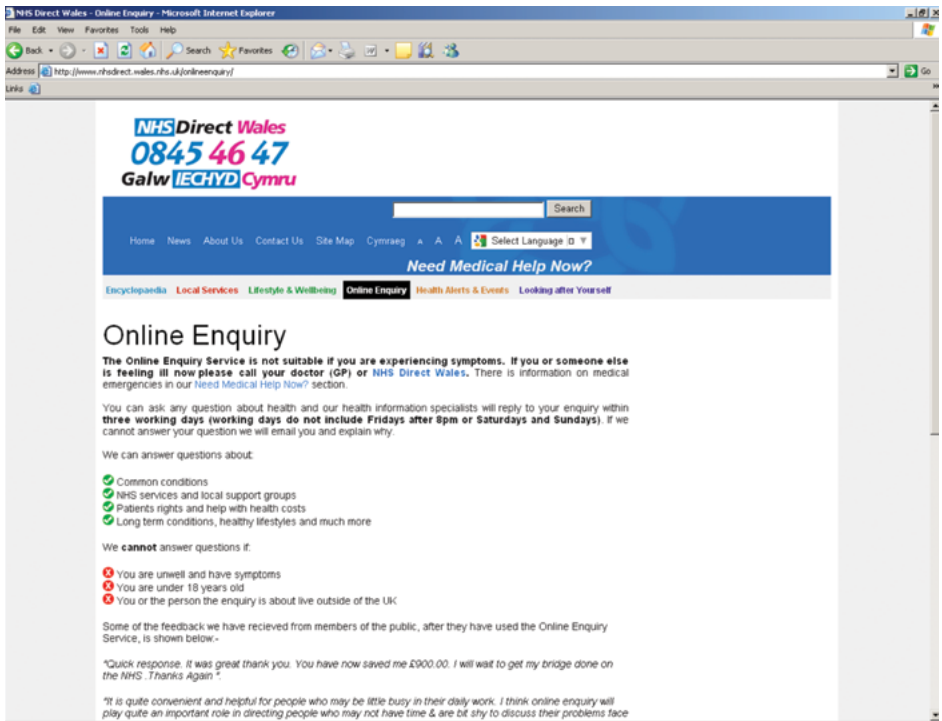
Setting up an *asynchronous* online web service means that someone is designated to look at emails from patients and service users at a certain point in the week, when they will

respond appropriately. Patients and service users need to be made aware of this and told how long they will have to wait for a reply.

The NHS Direct Wales online enquiry service is an example of an *asynchronous* NHS web service. This type of site offers specific types

of advice within an agreed time frame. In the case of NHS Direct Wales health information specialists reply to enquiries within three working days.

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/onlineenquiry



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5. Governance principles for web service design

In accordance with the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) *Code of professional conduct* health care practitioners must treat information about patients and clients as confidential, and use it only for the purpose

for which it was given (NMC, 2004). Health care practitioners must ensure that an up-to-date organisational confidentiality and communication policy exists in their speciality that includes website design and use.



6. Core design principles for developing and using web information

Information you produce for a site should be:

- in line with accepted national and international guidelines and the results of systematic reviews
- based on scientific evidence such as data from published clinical trials, or combined analyses of trials if there are no national guidelines
- based on a consensus view of experts where such evidence is not available
- produced to meet the criteria of the *Discern Index* (www.discern.org.uk) and contain information pages that describe treatments
- able to help a person make a decision using The International Patient Decision Aid Standards (www.ipdasi.org).

It is recommended that:

- an information development team is established to work with a clinical advisory board and specialist advisory panel to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date
- final responsibility for clinical content is decided by a named editor or editorial board
- service users are involved in identifying content, writing information and reviewing content to ensure that the language and tone is appropriate
- spontaneous feedback on information is noted, valued and kept on file for consideration at time of next review
- publications are regularly reviewed, updated and revised accordingly by the multidisciplinary team to ensure they are still current and accurate
- information is reviewed in a timely manner if: evidence changes; there are new developments in treatment; or new national guidelines are published.

7. Tips for creating a good website

- Identify the key staff involved and include a way of contacting your organisation. This information should be made available on the *About us* page.
- Focus on quality, and include robust information governance systems that ensure information is reviewed before it is posted.
- Create a clear definition of roles regarding website maintenance and updating.
- Identify roles and responsibilities in organisations' job descriptions.
- Ensure all reviewer are experts in the field.
- Explain how information is selected and reviewed, and ensure it is current. Website links should work.
- Maximise transparency and minimise bias on the website. The site should clearly state its purpose and give details of who provides the funding
- Acknowledge and label advertisements. They should say *Advertisement* or *From our sponsor*.
- The site should protect privacy and maintain patient confidentiality. Details of how this is achieved should be explained in the privacy policy.
- To make sure you can access the best local expertise, you should identify and contact the key IT people.
- Make sure your website design - for example text size and formatting - is accessible for a partially sighted user.





8. Three key quality issues

Producing relevant, accurate and reliable patient information that is clear and understandable is a challenge. To find out if the website is of high quality, measure it against these three key quality issues:

- accessibility
- usability
- reliability.

Accessibility

People can access information regardless of whether they have any disabilities relevant to ecommunication.

The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) works with worldwide organisations to develop strategies, guidelines and resources to help make the web accessible to people with disabilities. They list a number of tools that can be used to assess the accessibility of websites www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools

Usability

Information is clear and understandable, and answers the readers' questions or concerns. Information should be written in everyday language and be sensitive to gender, age and cultural needs.

English language readability tests are designed to assess how easily a piece of text can be read. They are based on assessing the average number of syllables per word and words per sentence. SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook) is a formula for measuring reading levels.

SMOG calculators can be found at www.literacytrust.org.uk/campaign/SMOG.html

Reliability

Information is based on appropriate, up-to-date evidence. It should be presented in an unbiased way and refer to the benefits and risks of a treatment or procedure and give alternative options, where this is appropriate. The Picker Institute Europe (2006) uses a revised version of The International Patient Decision Aid Standards (IPDAS) checklist to assess the quality of information materials. This can be found at www.pickereurope.org/Filestore/PIE_reports/project_reports/Health-information-quality-web-version-FINAL.pdf



9. Conclusion

Today's patients and service users are increasingly familiar with the internet in their everyday lives, and want access to better health information online so that they can be more involved in decision making and treatment options. Health care practitioners have a critical role to play in

using eHealth services such as websites to deliver that high quality and affordable patient care and advice. Websites are highly effective ways of signposting and improving patients' access to health care and advice services, and will ultimately enhance patient education.



10. Links and references

The *Judge project guidelines* have been developed for assessing the quality of health information websites. The website provides quality criteria to evaluate the quality of website information: www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/academic/ceis/re/isrc/themes/ibarea/jud/

The Department of Health Information Standard is a certification scheme and quality mark. The Information Standard scheme was developed to help the public identify trustworthy health and social care information easily: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/PatientChoice/BetterInformationChoicesHealth/Informationstandard/index.htm

The [Cochrane Collaboration](http://www.cochrane.org) [systematic reviews](http://www.cochrane.org) are patient decision aids for treatment or screening decisions: www.cochrane.org/cochrane-reviews

NHS Inform is a new health information service that provides a co-ordinated approach and a single source of quality assured health information for patients/ service users: www.nhsinform.co.uk

Net Scoring Criteria is an online resource designed to provide a set of criteria that can be used to assess the quality of health information on the internet: www.chu-rouen.fr/netscoring/netscoringeng.html

The Intute: Health and Life Sciences Evaluation Guidelines provide a template to evaluate health resources online: www.intute.ac.uk/healthandlifesciences/BIOME_Evaluation_Guidelines.doc

The Minervalidation tool has been designed to evaluate the design and content of health web sites: www.minervation.com/mod_product/LIDA/minervalidation.pdf



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