



Back Problems and the Internet



Because back pain is such a common problem, patients are seeking information over the Internet in tremendous numbers. In fact, it may be the most popular topic about which patients are seeking medical information on the Internet. It has been said that patients are seeking diagnostic and treatment advice with abandon.

Patients sometimes arrive at the offices of their doctors with a self diagnosis and a list of desired treatments. Physicians have been skeptical about communicating with their patients over the Internet for back problems because the communication links do not insure privacy, liability issues are undefined, and physicians cannot fully assess the patient's health status or capacity to absorb and understand the advice. It has been said that physicians lag behind patients in their appreciation of the Internet and when it comes to using new, interactive technologies, physicians' views on the Internet vary from ambivalence to active resistance.

Most physicians are uncomfortable with patients who walk into their offices with self diagnoses pulled off the Internet.

Physicians are also concerned that the Internet makes all sources of health care information appear equal, which is definitely not the case. Physicians see interactive information and technologies coming between them and their patients. They feel that this is a further loss of control over the traditional physician/patient relationship.

Interactive communication technologies are not going to go away and medical providers will need to become more comfortable with them. Medicine has been historically very slow to embrace new communications technology.

Physicians, and back specialists in particular, would be well advised to explore some of the resources available to patients and get a sense of the digital



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landscape.

Physicians will need to be proactive rather than defensive when the patient comes into the office armed with a printout of back pain treatment.



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Please consult Dr. Haverbush or a physician for specific treatment recommendations.

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