

POSTER ABSTRACTS

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PS2 – 37

Oral Cancer Information on the Web: Assessing the Quality and Content of English and Spanish Oral Cancer Websites

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Background/Aims: In the United States, about 8,000 people a year die from oral cancer and more than 30,000 new cases are diagnosed annually. A recent study showed that 80% of American adult Internet users have searched the Web for health information and 15% of those specifically searched for dental health information. Having high quality oral cancer information available via the Web is important given the significance of this health problem. The goal of this study was to evaluate the quality and content of multiple English and Spanish oral cancer websites.

Methods: We developed a search strategy using the keywords oral cancer, mouth cancer and tongue cancer to find oral cancer sites via Medline Plus, Google and Yahoo. We then used the translations cancer oral, cancer de la boca, and cancer de la lengua to search Medline Plus en Español, Google Español and Yahoo Telemundo. We added sites to the datasets based on inclusion/exclusion criteria. Two native speaking raters evaluated each site within their set for quality using the modified Information Quality Tool (IQT). We then developed a survey tool to assess the content of the sites. Two native speaking oral cancer experts evaluated each site within their set using this new tool.

Results: Our search strategy produced 24 English-language sites and 24 Spanish-language sites for evaluation. English-language websites had an average IQT score of 74.7 (out of 100) and average content score of 51.5 (out of 100). Spanish-language sites had an average IQT score of 48.8 and an average content score of 25.9.

Conclusions: Despite higher scores for the English-language websites, our analysis showed that there was a great variation in overall quality and content with room for improvement for both language types. English sites could make the biggest improvements by providing more information about their sponsors and who controls site content as well as updated and fixing links and author credentials. The Spanish sites should focus on improving information about their agenda and overall site design. For content, both types of sites need to provide more images and information on etiology and risk factors. Both English and Spanish sites scored highest in coverage of clinical presentation, treatment and follow-up care after treatment. Overall, this study identifies several information gaps and areas for improvements for oral cancer websites. We hope our results will be used to improve online oral cancer information.