

How can Google be used in medicine?

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Here is some advice on how to use Google in medicine...

Google can and must be used in medicine. For precise questions, for basic questions and for much else ...

The simple advice that one can give for medical searches on Google is the following: use several precise medical keywords. "Several" to limit the number of results, "medical" to find high quality information, "precise" so that the results correspond as nearly as possible to your requirements.

The choice of key words is paramount. For the general public, the term "erectile dysfunction" will return sites intended for health care professionals.

The results obtained will be more meaningful if the internet user masters the advanced search strategies of Google. The simplicity of use of the basic search facilities of Google can sometimes be a danger. Due to this simplicity, Google users may not make the most of it. For example, the use of the term "impotent" will return sites intended for the general public, but the use of the term "erectile dysfunction" will return sites intended for health care professionals. They thus risk not finding information which would be available to them.

To become a Google expert, consult the excellent Google Guide.

The doctor who uses the internet for clinical questions must not only limit himself/herself to Google, other sources of information must also be mastered. It is essential to know when to use Google and when to not use Google. Sometimes the doctor has need of a more precise document which can only be found in a textbook (eMedicine, free, registration necessary), in a journal article (PubMed

Central, the bibliographic database of the US National Library of Medicine, the articles are available free of charge in their entirety) or a synthesis document which can only be found in a data base such as UpToDate (an excellent medical database, subject to charge).