

Is the Quality of Patient-Provider Interactions Associated with Use of the Internet as a Preferred Source of Health and Medical Information? Findings from HINTS 4 Cycle 1

Jennifer Faith, MS and Sheryl Thorburn, PhD, MPH

Oregon State University

College of Public Health and Human Sciences

School of Social and Behavioral Health Sciences

Background

- Negative health care experiences linked to health information-seeking choices by consumers
- Internet health information-seeking increasingly common
 - Has been associated with:
 - Negative encounters with providers
 - Unanswered questions after a visit
 - Time constraints
 - Shame and embarrassment resulting from interactions with providers

Study Purpose

- Examine the association between perceived quality of patient-provider interactions and
 - (1) use of the Internet first the most recent time health information was sought and
 - (2) intention to use the Internet first in the event of a strong need for health information

Conclusions

- Perceived quality of patient-provider interactions:
 - (1) was not significantly associated with using the Internet first for health information
 - (2) was significantly associated with intending to use the Internet first in the event of a strong need for health information

Methods

- Data are from HINTS 4 Cycle 1
 - Collected October 2011-February 2012
 - N=3,959

Variables

- Independent Variable: Perceived Quality of Patient-Provider Interactions
 - Created scale averaging responses to 7 items (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.90$)
 - E.g.: During the past 12 months, how often did doctors, nurses, or other health professionals give you the chance to ask all of the health-related questions you had?
 - Scale scores skewed toward positive perceived quality: 31% answered "always" to all questions
 - Created three groups:
 - High: average response of "always" – 31% of sample
 - Middle: average response of "usually" – 42.9% of sample
 - Low: average response of "never or sometimes" – 25.8% of sample

Variables

- Dependent Variables
 - (1) Respondent went to the Internet first the most recent time he/she looked for health information
 - (2) Respondent would go to the Internet first in the event of a strong need for information about health and medical topics

Data Analysis

- All analyses weighted
 - Univariate descriptive analyses
 - Bivariate logistic regression
 - Multivariate logistic regression
 - Covariates: Adjusted for sociodemographic and health-related characteristics significant at $p < 0.1$ in bivariate associations

Results

- Perceived quality of patient-provider interactions not significantly related to using the Internet first on the most recent information search
- Perceived quality of patient-provider interactions was significantly related to intending to use the Internet first if a strong need for information existed
 - Compared to those with the highest perceived quality interactions, intention to use the Internet was higher among those with:
 - Middle perceived quality interactions
 - AOR=1.48; CI: 1.02, 2.13 ($p<0.05$)
 - Lowest perceived quality interactions
 - AOR=1.99; CI: 1.32, 3.01 ($p<0.01$)

Implications and Conclusions

- Patient-provider relationships may influence intention and preferences for where or from whom consumers seek health information
- Future research should examine:
 - Patient-provider relationship characteristics that most strongly predict subsequent health information-seeking behaviors
 - Use of the Internet as an alternative or as a complement to seeking health information from providers
 - The influence of Internet information-seeking on subsequent health care utilization and health behaviors