



Please cite this reference when referring to this paper:

Speier, DS, Laing, AW, Hogg, G, Newholm, T, Minocha, S, Keeling, D (2008) Studying E-Health – The Impact of Internet Use on Patient-Professional Interactions and Patient Behaviours, unpublished paper, Royal Society of Medicine Conference: Optimising Patient-Centred Care – The role of E-Health, London, 24 November 2008.

TeleMed and eHealth '08



Studying E-Health: the Impact of
Internet Use on Patient-Professional
Interactions and Patient Behaviours

Dr Diane S Speier

(Manchester Business School)

Prof Angus W Laing (Glasgow), Prof Gillian Hogg (Heriot-Watt),

Dr Terry Newholm (MBS), Dr Shailey Minocha (Open),

Prof Linda Davies (Manchester), Dr Debbie Keeling (MBS)

Edward Shiu (Strathclyde)

Studying E-Health



- * Patients, Professionals and the Internet:
Renegotiating the Healthcare Encounter
 - The 4 other strands & Progress to date
 - Incidence of Internet Use - survey
 - Patient Information Search and Evaluation
 - Virtual Health Communities
 - Stated Health Preferences - DCE

- * Longitudinal ethnographic strand - core
 - Qualitative research
 - Consultations, interviews and diaries
 - Patients and professionals use of internet

Studying E-Health



- * Users and non-users
- * Recruitment Challenges
 - PCRN-NW helped recruit practices, but only one patient recruited
 - Cancer patients recruited in clinics
 - Diabetes patients recruited in clinics later
 - Survey participants recruited to additional strands
- * Other sources of information
 - Professional advice
 - Printed materials
 - * Pamphlets
 - * Newspapers
 - * Friends and relatives

Studying E-Health



* Internet user patterns

– Timing of use

“...because I haven't looked up anything. Until I get a diagnosis I haven't – I refuse, I've stopped myself.” [MC-1]

“...when I first, erm, found out that there was a problem, um, for about the first week or ten days, err, I didn't really do anything.” [PC-1]

“Well I think they need those key words...because unless you know the diagnosis or something to look up then it's an impossible source. [PC-A]

Studying E-Health



* Reservations about use

- “I will look sometime. I just don’t really see a great benefit from it, getting tons and tons of information to digest when I’ve got three experts to talk to...[and] is more likely to depress you than inform you.” [PC-5]
- “I haven’t because of the fact that quite a lot of information that one receives from the media about health can be misleading.” [PC-7]

Studying E-Health



*Internet saturation and overwhelm

“I think you can saturate yourself with so much information that you begin to get a bit dazzled by it.” [PC-3]

“Yeah, well that’s one of the reasons I don’t look at it because there’s an overwhelming amount of information.” [PC-5]

“I looked under breast, I looked under cancer of the breast and there was a load of information, so much so that I couldn’t cope with all of it... Well I was inundated, yes.” [BC-1]

“Just the amount of information you can get there. It’s colossal isn’t it?” [PC-9]

Studying E-Health



*Evaluation of information

“even patients who don’t have any background about medical things can sometimes be so knowledgeable because of the internet.” [DI-2]

“I think it’s made us think that possibly, if and when we do get a computer, if anything else cropped up with either of us I think we would – I would certainly – look on the internet for information.” [PC-2]

Studying E-Health



* Reliability of information

“I’ve got to have faith and I’ve got to use my own judgement on it. I think if you get it from several sources exactly the same then of course that establishes some kind of credibility.” [PC-9]

“I know if there is a lot of research that’s gone into and they have checked on 10,000 people and come up with these results, well obviously you would feel ‘well they have done their homework and there must be something in it’.” [MC-2]

Studying E-Health



* Medical encounter – the influence of the internet - Patient perspective

“...if you weren’t there within that group, or on the Internet, ...if it wasn’t for that, I’d be going in this completely blind, whereas now I think, well, I’ve got a little bit of information and I know what to ask...”[BC-5]

“I regard it as *Reader’s Digest* knowledge...so I just dipped in to have a look at what was possible and again, the NHS Direct...provided me with sufficient information and so when I got the phone call from Mr... I knew what he was talking about and went in.” [PC-9]

Studying E-Health



*Professional perspective

- “it’s helpful for the patients to – I think if they read with an open mind and come back with questions, that’s fine.” [PC-B]
- “Well there’s plenty of anecdotal evidence... you know, totally non-scientific treatments but they’re out there and people access them and they occasionally come in and say ‘what about this?’” [PC-C]
- “But I would prefer that patients got their information from the professionals.” [BC-A]

Studying E-Health



*Ageing population will gravitate to the web

- average age of participants (so far) – 62

“most patients in the younger age groups now will have gone and looked up stuff on the internet and... as patients, people are getting more used to the internet and people are becoming a bit more discerning.” [PC-A]

“most of them are just slightly older than the internet generation and therefore it’s not the natural thing for them to sit down at a keyboard and enter something, whereas clearly that will gradually kick in as time goes on. ”[PC-1]

“Unfortunately I think it came out, you know, the use of it by the time when I got to an age when it was fairly difficult to sell it to me.” [PC-7]

Studying E-Health



*Integrating internet with patient pathway

- “...that information there, that lays it out quite clearly. Slightly expanded is the internet information and also...you were there at that consultation with..., I mean how anybody could come out feeling anything other than overwhelmingly confident in his approach and attitude...” [PC-1]
- “I’d probably go on the Internet, it’s easier, because I can do it now,...whereas if I need to speak to [nurse specialists] I’d have to leave a message and then wait till she rings me back, which is a brilliant service, but I’m the sort of person that wants to know it now, while it’s fresh in my mind” [BC-5]

Studying E-Health



* Evolving patterns of patient-professional interactions?

“In England when you used to go to the doctor’s they never told you a thing and they used to speak above you, speak over your head. You would be there but you were invisible.”
[PC-6]

* Multidisciplinary team approach to health care

“they may have come under me initially, I might get them to see [oncology consultant], they may go to see [laparoscopic surgeon], but all along the way they’ve been given a key worker nurse with a contact number...and that person becomes their continuity.” [PC-A]

- Findings come from secondary care
 - Less relationship, more interaction

Studying E-Health



*E-health – an evolving frontier

“Well I think it’s a really good piece of communication which is presently overtaking all other means of communication in the world.” [PC-7]

*The NHS will design services that integrate the internet

- Guidelines for professionals supporting patients in use of the internet
- Patients with higher level information, can interact in more sophisticated ways
- Power asymmetry shifts related to access to information are facilitated by the internet

Studying E-Health



* Conclusions

- We have not yet seen changes in the dynamics between patients and professionals in the consultations we've observed
- We are seeing changes in the behaviours of patients, based on internet access
- We are seeing changes in attitudes with patients who have not accessed the internet and those whose activities have increased dramatically
- Using the internet for health information is a growing phenomenon as the population ages