

HEALTH INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG ELDERLY WHO USE THE INTERNET IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The Internet is viewed as an important source for health information and a medium for patient empowerment in treatment and prevention of diseases. However, little is known about why and how the Internet was used for gathering health information among elderly in Malaysia. The aim of the study is to identify how the elderly using the internet for health information seeking, which sources are preferred and trusted for health information and what type of health information are used by elderly for information needs. A cross-sectional study was conducted in 23 Elderly Activity Centre throughout Malaysia from August to October 2017. A total of 1400 elderly were sampled in this study, unfortunately the elderly turned up only 805 (57.5%) which aged 60 years and above. A self-administered with minimal guidance and face to face interview by trained research assistants were used in this study. The study showed of the total 805 respondents, only 258 (33.0%) elderly use the internet. Those using the internet are 89 (30.2%) male and 169 (69.8%) female. Most of them are government retirees (65.7%). The study found that some of the reasons the elderly seek health information through the internet because it was free (68.3%) as well as easy and fast (61.8%). The study also found that the type of health information sought most is information on certain diseases such as cancer, diabetes, hypertension and others (47.9%). With regards to the places of internet access, about 86.2% of the respondents have internet access at home followed by internet service provider 36.3% and Elderly Activity Centre 17.0%. Only 2.5% and 3.2% of respondents access internet at Cyber Cafe and workplace respectively. The highest showed that 24.8% respondent access internet everyday followed by several times in a month 23.6% and twice or thrice in a week 21.9%. Overall, 47.8% of elderly claimed internet can be a very helpful resource for seeking health information.