



2009 ESSENTIAL WEBSITE STUDY

ESSENTIAL

HOW PHYSICIANS USE
MEDICAL WEBSITES

H O W P H Y S I C I A N S U S E M E D I C A L W E B S I T E S

Medical websites have become an essential information resource for physicians. To learn how they use the web to find medical information and which websites they consider essential to their practice, the *New England Journal of Medicine* recently asked Panel Intelligence, an independent research firm, to survey physicians in six key specialties. Although NEJM sponsored the study, it was not identified as the sponsor.

Here are the results:

- 1 Physicians look to the web to meet their medical information needs, with 58 to 80% accessing medical websites **10 or more times per week** depending on specialty.
- 2 They look to the web most often for **specific information** about drugs, diseases or medical conditions or to **stay current** with the medical literature.
- 3 Not surprisingly, they judge a site by its **credibility and quality** as opposed to its “bells and whistles.”
- 4 **NEJM.org** ranked among the **top 10 essential websites** and was visited with weekly or greater frequency.

SPECIALTIES SURVEYED

Cardiology
Internal Medicine
Endocrinology
Infectious Disease
Nephrology
Oncology

TYPES OF WEBSITES CITED

Medical journals
Clinical databases
Medical associations
Hospital intranets
Pharma-sponsored physician portals
Government agencies/departments
“Popular” sites or sites accessed by the general public

1 THEY LOOK TO THE WEB FOR INFORMATION

Times per week medical websites are consulted for information	Internal Medicine	Cardiology	Infectious Disease	Endocrinology	Nephrology	Oncology
10+	80%	51%	68%	65%	65%	74%
6-10	17%	31%	31%	24%	25%	19%
3-5	3%	9%	11%	11%	10%	8%

2 THEY CONSULT SITES FOR MANY REASONS

- 88%** For information about a drug
- 79** For information about a disease or medical condition
- 77** For information to stay current with medical literature
- 75** For information about treatment guidelines
- 67** For the latest research on a specific topic
- 62** For medical education (CME)
- 62** For information to use at the point of care
- 61** For medical news
- 48** For teaching and presentation materials
- 47** For patient education materials

3 EACH SPECIALTY SEEKS DIFFERENT INFORMATION

Reason for consulting medical websites*	Internal Medicine	Cardiology	Infectious Disease	Endocrinology	Nephrology	Oncology
For information about a drug	87%	87%	85%	92%	90%	86%
For information about a disease or medical condition	78%	66%	81%	85%	85%	79%
For information to stay current with medical literature	75%	78%	78%	81%	75%	75%
For information to use at the point of care	70%	48%	65%	57%	72%	58%
For medical education (CME) purposes	68%	59%	61%	65%	74%	49%
For information about treatment guidelines	66%	68%	82%	67%	79%	85%
For patient education materials	61%	40%	50%	49%	46%	35%
For medical news	57%	75%	55%	70%	56%	52%
For the latest research on a specific topic	53%	66%	70%	66%	74%	70%
For teaching and presentation materials	37%	46%	52%	56%	53%	42%

* Ordered by IM responses.

4 T H E Y C H O O S E S I T E S F O R C R E D I B I L I T Y A N D Q U A L I T Y

Mean*	Attributes considered when evaluating websites
6.4	Credibility of information
6.4	Quality of information
6.0	Currency of information
5.9	Benefit to patients and clinical practice
5.7	Ease of use
5.6	Amount of free information
5.5	Scope of information
5.5	Reputation of associated organization
5.3	Reputation of website
4.9	Availability of images
4.7	Interactive features
4.5	Recommendation of colleagues

* Each of the attributes were valued on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 = least valuable and 7 = most valuable.

5 TOP 10 ESSENTIAL WEBSITES

In an unaided-recall query, respondents were asked to identify the medical websites that were essential to their practice. Depending on specialty, they identified between 58 and 85 sites. In every specialty, **NEJM.org** ranked among the **top 10 essential websites**.

Internal Medicine	Cardiology	Infectious Disease	Endocrinology	Nephrology	Oncology
Essential mentions # Website	Essential mentions # Website	Essential mentions # Website	Essential mentions # Website	Essential mentions # Website	Essential mentions # Website
52 UpToDate	59 ACC	40 UpToDate	45 UpToDate	78 UpToDate	61 UpToDate
49 WebMD	39 AHA	37 Medscape	36 Medscape	38 ASN	60 NCCN
26 NEJM	34 Medscape	33 CDC	36 AACE	34 PubMed	52 ASCO
26 Medscape	33 Cardiosource	32 PubMed	32 PubMed	27 Medscape	35 PubMed
20 Google	27 UpToDate	32 IDSA	30 ADA	26 NEJM	26 JCO
20 eMedicine	26 WebMD	25 NEJM	27 NEJM	23 HDCN	23 NEJM
20 Rheumatology	26 NEJM	24 WebMD	25 WebMD	22 NKF	23 ASH
17 PubMed	23 Theheart	19 Google	25 Endocrine	17 WebMD	22 NCI
16 MerckMedicus	22 PubMed	17 Epocrates	18 Google	17 Epocrates	19 Medscape
16 Epocrates	18 Google	14 eMedicine	13 Epocrates	14 Google	13 Google
n = 85 Top 10 = 60%	n = 67 Top 10 = 64%	n = 83 Top 10 = 61%	n = 84 Top 10 = 64%	n = 76 Top 10 = 65%	n = 58 Top 10 = 70%

Please note: Not all of these sites accept advertising. See page 8 for key to essential websites.

6 FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO ESSENTIAL WEBSITES

Respondents were asked how often they visited the medical sites that they had identified as essential. Frequency of visits were scored according to the legend below from several times a day to monthly or less. In every specialty, **NEJM.org** was visited with **weekly or greater frequency**.

Ranked by Essential Websites

Internal Medicine	Cardiology	Infectious Disease	Endocrinology	Nephrology	Oncology
Frequency of use Score Website	Frequency of use Score Website	Frequency of use Score Website	Frequency of use Score Website	Frequency of use Score Website	Frequency of use Score Website
6.1 UpToDate	4.6 ACC	5.3 UpToDate	5.5 UpToDate	6.0 UpToDate	5.9 UpToDate
4.9 WebMD	4.4 AHA	5.1 Medscape	4.9 Medscape	4.5 ASN	5.7 NCCN
4.8 NEJM	4.5 Medscape	4.5 CDC	4.5 AACE	4.9 PubMed	5.0 ASCO
5.1 Medscape	5.2 Cardiosource	5.2 PubMed	5.5 PubMed	5.0 Medscape	5.8 PubMed
6.4 Google	5.1 UpToDate	4.4 IDSA	4.0 ADA	4.3 NEJM	4.5 JCO
5.7 eMedicine	4.6 WebMD	4.6 NEJM	4.7 NEJM	4.5 HDCN	4.6 NEJM
5.4 Rheumatology	4.2 NEJM	5.0 WebMD	4.6 WebMD	4.2 NKF	4.7 ASH
5.4 PubMed	5.2 Theheart	6.4 Google	4.7 Endocrine	3.8 WebMD	4.8 NCI
5.1 MerckMedicus	4.5 PubMed	6.4 Epocrates	5.9 Google	6.5 Epocrates	4.4 Medscape
6.4 Epocrates	6.4 Google	4.9 eMedicine	6.1 Epocrates	5.6 Google	6.2 Google
n = 85	n = 67	n = 83	n = 84	n = 76	n = 58

Frequency of use 7: Multiple times/day. 6: Once/day. 5: Several times/week but not daily. 4: Weekly. 3: A few times/month. 2: Once/month. 1: Rarely.

Please note: Not all of these sites accept advertising. See page 8 for key to essential websites.

7 KEY TO ESSENTIAL WEBSITES

Abbreviation	Website Name	URL
AACE	American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists	aace.com
ACC	American College of Cardiology	acc.org
ADA	American Diabetes Association	diabetes.org
AHA	American Heart Association	americanheart.org
ASCO	American Society of Clinical Oncology	asco.org
ASH	American Society of Hematology	hematology.org
ASN	American Society of Nephrology	asn-online.org
Cardiosource	Cardiosource from the American College of Cardiology	cardiosource.com
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	cdc.gov
eMedicine	eMedicine from Medscape	emedicine.medscape.com
Endocrine	The Endocrine Society	endo-society.org
Epocrates	Epocrates	epocrates.com
Google	Google	google.com
HDCN	Hypertension, Dialysis & Clinical Nephrology	hdcn.com
IDSA	Infectious Diseases Society of America	idsociety.org
JCO	Journal of Clinical Oncology	jco.ascopubs.org
Medscape	Medscape from WebMD	medscape.com
MerckMedicus	MerckMedicus	merckmedicus.com
NCCN	National Comprehensive Cancer Network	nccn.org
NCI	National Cancer Institute	cancer.gov
NEJM	The New England Journal of Medicine	nejm.org
NKF	National Kidney Foundation	kidney.org
PubMed	PubMed	pubmed.gov
Rheumatology	American College of Rheumatology	rheumatology.org
Theheart	Theheart.org from WebMD	theheart.org
UpToDate	UpToDate	uptodate.com
WebMD	WebMD	webmd.com

M E T H O D O L O G Y

The Essential Website Study was conducted between October 6 and November 20, 2008 as a self-administered online survey. No incentive was offered for participation.

Screening criteria for participation included US-based physicians under the age of 65 who use the internet for medical information at least three times per week.

A survey quota of 100 physicians from each of six key specialties was established, with 10 to 20% of respondents required to be key opinion leaders. Non-opinion leaders were required to spend at least 75% of their time in clinical practice. A total of 607 qualified responses were received.

Panel Intelligence, an independent research firm, conducted the study and analyzed the results on behalf of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. NEJM was not identified as a sponsor of the study.

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