Examining the online approaches used by hospitals in Sydney, Australia to inform patients about healthcare associated infections and infection prevention strategies

Never Stand Still | Faculty of Medicine | School of Public Health and Community Medicine

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The provision of information on HCAIs could positively influence the patients' engagement in infection control strategies…..

The patient will demonstrate better understanding about
the pathogens; risks etc….

….are more actively engaged in infection control and prevention measures

However…..

- It is important to recognise that it is not enough to just provide information.

- The strategy used to deliver the information is also important.

- For example, it has been previously shown that providing patients with only verbal information is ineffective as the retention of this information can be short-lived, whereas the provision of written information is thought to be more beneficial

- In Australia, performance information is provided on the myhospitals.gov.au website.

- People with low health literacy are more likely to seek health information from computer-based health information systems

- Important to review the suitability, readability and accessibility of information

Aim and approach

- Explore the online approach taken in Sydney, Australia to inform hospital patients about infection control and HH

- Included all public hospitals with >200 beds

- Online resources targeted at patients (current/future) and which focused on 'HCAIs', 'infection control' and 'prevention measures'

- Hospital policies and staff guidelines found in the search were excluded.

- Evaluated using two assessment methods: Suitability Assessment of Material (SAM) and Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) readability formula.

- SAM has 22 factors that are grouped under six categories:

  - content, literacy demand, graphics, layout and typography, learning stimulation, motivation and cultural appropriateness.

- Each factor is given a score of either 0 (not suitable), 1 (adequate) or 2 (superior) depending on how the material meets the criteria

- A sum of each factor was divided by the highest possible total score. The figure, then, was multiplied by 100 to get the percent score.

- The percentage scores were interpreted as 'superior (70-100%)', 'adequate (40-69%)' or 'not suitable (0-39%).

Results

- 19 acute care public hospitals (with > 200 beds) under eight Local Heath Districts (LHDs)

- 36 webpages containing information or other resources (links, videos etc.) that were relevant

- Either written info on site or downloadable PDF, a link to an external site or video clip.

- In most cases the webpage was not exclusively dedicated to information about HCAIs and HH

- Messages about infection prevention were embedded into webpages focused on providing general information about hospital admissions or as part of a welcome message to patients attending the hospital

- Difficult to locate the information- death by clicking

- Search boxes offered on the webpage had to be utilized to find any relevant information. However, most of the search results returned irrelevant information for patients such as policies or hospital guidelines.
- 22/36 included tips for visitors: HH, respiratory etiquette, encouraging them to stay away if sick
- 12/36 mentioned patient empowerment, 10/36 spoke about the rational for patient HH and only 3 explained what an HCAI was.
- Most failed when it came to modified web version for mobile use
- Based on the SAM and SMOG scores, 11/36 webpages were found to be 'not suitable' for patients
- 3 were superior
- The mean SMOG score (10.32) was above 9th grade level (collage level), which is 4 grades higher than the recommended level
- 50% used an active voice

- 'Road signs' that help readers' thought process were not utilized in most of resources.

- Only a small number of the sites (5/36) used the format of 'question and answer' to stimulate learning

- Only two contained graphics that directly related to the purpose of information on HCAIs, and which were deemed to be attractive.

- Most of the sites (33/36) contained some form of instruction on how to conduct HH (either with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub), when and where to perform HH, and other ways to reduce infections.

- None of the sites provided information in any other languages and most pictures included on the sites were of Caucasians.

Discussion

- Information focused on HCAIs and HH was mostly collated with general information about 'staying at the hospital' (i.e. about patient rights, using the entertainment system, etc.).

- In most cases, there was little in the way of headings/subheadings so searching for the information on HCAIs and HH required multiple clicks through other pages/sites.

- The information being presented on HCAIs is currently too difficult for people to understand and act upon, especially for those who speak English as a second language and have lower health literacy.

- Most sites use generic 'stock' photos showing Caucasian doctors, nurses and patients, which does not represent the Australia healthcare workforce and does not reflect the staff members that they are going to interact with during their hospital stay

- Likely that patients find the information overwhelming and its usability low