



Promoting Health Information with Technology: Determining the Dependability of the Information

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ABSTRACT

We now live in the information age where access to Internet resources is just a few clicks away. The Internet is a technology, which has gained more popularity in many countries across the world and Ghana, is no exception. The Internet as a medium of communication and source of information has enabled students, researchers, business information seekers and information professionals to access information to enhance their work and communicate effectively. Hence, there is the need to determine the dependability of the information gathered from these sources.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world the dissemination of any type of information has become very easy and has brought about some great benefits in the health sector as well as serious challenges when it comes to health promotion issues. This is because both the good and bad information is disseminated across almost the same platforms which sometimes create a conflict in the minds of persons who are not well endowed in health issues. For this reason there is a need to sort out the good information from the bad information and this chapter is to bring to light the various approaches and techniques that are required when sorting out such health information. The use of technological tools in health promotion is not only limited to the dissemination of information but has been gradually integrated into the general healthcare service which benefits not only health practitioners but also individuals and the entire society. Some possibilities of technology in health promotion are telemedicine services, electronic health records, health portals, tele-Internal Care Unit (ICU) services and health information networks, which helps improve and promote health by assisting health practitioners to detect, diagnose, prevent, monitor and treat diseases, as well as enable individuals to manage their lifestyle and improve their wellness and quality of life [1].

DESCRIPTION

As stated by Blake (2008) health technologies are being used

on a daily basis for the prevention, diagnosing and treatment of diseases; the rehabilitation and long term care of patients; and the provision and evaluation of drugs, devices, clinical procedures and healthcare settings. Blake mentioned that new technologies are rapidly expanding in all areas of health communication and have the potential to reach larger and more diverse audiences than ever before. Some of these technologies are email, Social media and websites. The main role of these technologies in health promotion has been highlighted Blake already. A number of different uses of technologies in health promotion which span four broad thematic application areas have been were highlighted by Blake. It was suggested that the technologies may be used for a research focus by means of seeking and evaluating health information. Or they may be used as a research instrument, by means of collecting data, or accessing research participants. They further suggested that the technologies may be used for professional development, or as an intervention medium by means of distributing health information or initiating behaviour change. Of these four broad thematic areas misinformation can arise from any of them if care is not taken particularly with the research focus, research instrument and intervention medium. The final which is professional development is not of great concern as the three because a professional as the name suggest would have an idea of the general issue and would be easy to detect a miscommunication or misinformation but the other three involves individuals who may not have any knowledge or idea of the health issue being

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communicated through technology can be easily misinformed hence the need to educate people on how to identify on their own the right and trusted source of technology used to promote health knowledge [2].

Technologies Used for Health Promotion in the 21st Century

Technological tools that are used to disseminate health information to the public have become strategically important to both health practitioners and individuals. These technological tools are increasing exponentially in their daily applications not only for telemedicine and treatment of diseases but for pre-emptive health care. The focus of this section is on the use of various health technologies used to communicate a healthy behaviour to individuals within a society, region, country or the world as a whole. Example how technology was used disseminate information on living through the COVID 19 pandemic [3].

Text Messages (SMS/MMS)

The use of text messaging for the purpose of health promotion by NGOs and telecommunication network operators during the Covid 19 pandemic is very common in Ghana where I stay. On a daily basis messages are broadcast to all mobile telecommunication subscribers on symptoms and prevention of the spread of Covid 19, who or which office to contact when an individual feels any symptom similar to Covid 19 and how to get assistance for people who have been infected with the Covid 19 virus. Other information that was disseminated through text messaging by the NGOs, government and telecommunication networks were on an update of the Covid 19 situation in various places within the country and the availability of vaccines in other to help prevent the spread of infection. The text messaging technology appears effective as they were sent as constant reminders.

Caller Tunes/Automated Calls

Caller tunes/rings, recorded in different Ghanaian local dialects was used to advice the public of the existence of the Covid 19 virus, its symptoms, how to prevent it, availability of vaccines and recent updates. Recorded automated calls were also placed at random to phone users by the telecommunication networks for similar purpose all the help promote a good lifestyle and living condition.

Social Media

Social media seems to be an underutilised health promotional tool because its value is underestimated. Unlike the caller tunes and text messages that are provided by trusted organisations and sent to the public without request social media is another technological tool necessary for health promotion but cannot be trusted in full since any other person can create and paste his or her content there for the entire world to view. Hence, the use of social media for health promotion purposes is to be guided. With social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. people go there to search for the health promotional messages and others share health promotional messages but any reader or viewer of such health promotional

messages is to view such messages critically since it is also a place for conspiracies.

Electronic Mail (E-mail)

E-mail is a great technology used for health promotion since it can reach a larger population within a short space of time at a relatively lower cost. Knowledge on chronic and common health issues are sometimes sent to emails particularly if an individual has subscribed for such tips.

Summary of Section

It is basically good to know the various ways technology is being used to disseminate important health tips and knowledge to general public but is to be kept in mind that not all knowledge received from these technological sources are adequate, appropriate or justifiable so in the next section a discussion on how to confirm the adequacy and appropriateness of such messages is made. Read on to know how to justify the adequacy of the knowledge you gained from a technological application used for health promotion [4].

Ways to Determine the Adequacy of the Knowledge Gained from Health ePromotion

Health e-promotion is a necessity but cannot be fully trusted with the information that it provides since they are devices built by humans and can at any point in time malfunction by itself or intentionally through a cyberattack hence the need to always be ahead of such devices and technology that is being used to promote health in all aspects. Example, wearables are not immune to cyberattacks including hacks and any information or knowledge that is transmitted by the wearables to the user is to still be discussed with a licensed physician so that the adequate advice given by the physician can be followed as such.

There are other steps of verifying the knowledge gained from technology particularly on health issues and the use of any one or more of these approaches that are going to be discussed may help save the life of an individual.

If an individual learn about a health issue from the internet (WWW: World Wide Web), that individual should surely follow these few steps suggested below in other to prevent gaining any fake news knowledge. Fake news is a term used to describe the conspiracy and spread of false sensational information that has been masterfully structured so as to deceive the public under the pretence of news reporting.

To be able to refine your search on the internet so as to get adequate and accurate news follow the following steps.

1. Vary search engines for the same search, every search engine being Google, Bing, yahoo etc. operates with slightly different algorithms hence gives slightly different results so therefore if you are able to get same or similar results from all search engines then there is a likelihood of that particular information not being fake news. Other specialist search engines like google scholar and wolfram alpha can also be used for specific searches. Google scholar for instance permits individuals to search mainly for academ-

ic papers that may not pop up as a search result on the normal or general search engine and wolfram alpha also permits a user to search for mainly data and statistics on issues including health related issues.

2. As search engines are varied there is the need to also vary search terms by the use of synonyms for the keywords, keeping search words as limited as possible and using search operators like (+,-,*, OR, AND etc.) among others to refine a search and through that identify the similarities in the information that is gathered from the search results and the differences also. This can help to identify what is true from what is fiction.
3. Individuals can also use the CRAAP test; CRAAP is an acronym for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose for the evaluation of the chosen information that they consider to be valid based on the above steps.

CRAAP TEST

In evaluating the knowledge gained from a website an individual is to check the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose for which the information is being provided.

Currency

Currency refers to the timelines of information that have been gathered. Before the information is even read the individual is check on the date that information was first published and if there have been other publications or versions before or after the one being read so as to know if the information is out dated or there is a need for a further reading from the most current version. It is also necessary that when the reader starts reading consider the dates of the papers made mention off to support the writers claims.

Relevancy

Relevancy deals with the importance of the information for the researchers needs. With regards to relevance to the researcher it is always not going to be the same. The level of the individual with regards to his or her education, age and gender may influence the relevance of the required information.

Authority

Authority is about the source of the information so a researcher is required to identify the individuals who wrote the journal or article and understand their interest in the topic so as to know if it can be trusted or it is a misinformation. Authority goes further to consider the website of publication by considering the web address. A website that ends with .com is a commercial website and is mainly a website to generate profits, .edu is for educational purposes, gov is for a particular government examples .gh, .us etc., .org is a nonprofit organization, and .net is a network.

Accuracy

To determine the accuracy, an individual is to consider the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content that is being read. This can be identified by first identifying if the information is supported by evidence and if any of the information

is verifiable either by another source or from personal experience. Spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors should also be an eye opener to the accuracy of the information.

Purpose

Purpose, is about understanding the reason why the information was produced. Was it produced for purposes of propagan-da so as to cause fear and panic among the public, entertainment or educational among others. This can also be identified by identifying if the author used some political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases in the write up ([Figure 1](#)).



Figure 1: From IFLA, International Federation of Library Associations

CONCLUSION

From this short communication it has been noted that not all information that is found online maybe reliable. Some information may be reliable to a particular group of individuals as the same may be considered adequate for other groups of individuals. Hence, there is the need to know what the actual intent of the writer is and if it corresponds with the readers' intent. It has also been established from this short communication that, verifying from other sources is necessary.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author's declared that they have no conflict of interest

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