

What we already know:

- Health authorities are increasingly encouraging the population to become more proactive in terms of healthcare. Thus, the internet has become a very important source of readily-available health-related information for the general public - medical information which is no longer exclusively available to health professionals.
- Research shows that both GPs and patients are aware of, and concerned about, the possible implications of the use of the Internet on the doctor-patient interaction.

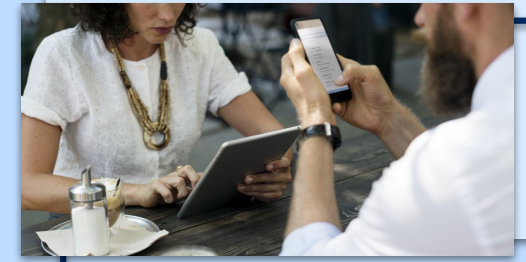


How we found out more:

- 281 pre-consultation patient **surveys**
- 281 **video-recordings** of consultations
- Post-consultation **interviews** with 10 GPs and 28 patients
- For this study, we focused exclusively on the 28 patient interview transcripts by means of a thematic analysis and a data clinic session.

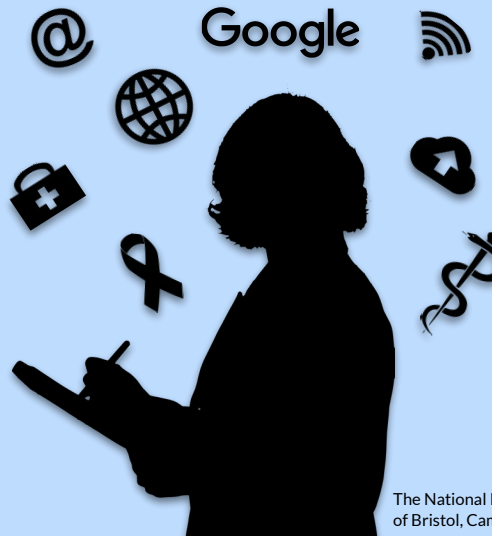


What do my symptoms mean?



What we found out:

- Patients associate Internet research with better quality and understanding of treatment as well as with helping GPs perceived as being unreasonably expected to keep up with all medical advances.
- Patients feel pressured to justify their research because of the fear of being associated with the negative stereotype of the hypochondriac patient and because of the perceived pressure on the NHS.
- Patients wish for their research efforts and concerns to be **acknowledged, examined and clarified by their GP.**



Conclusion:

- Patients are not only aware of the advantages, but also of the possible problems of using the Internet when looking for health-related information both in terms of ascertaining their sources' reliability and in terms of sharing their findings with their GP.
- Patients do not use the Internet as an avenue for challenging the medical expertise, but rather as a legitimate first resort in time of illness in order to maximise the efficiency, clarity and perceived quality of treatment during GP consultations.