

How to search for medical information online

The key issue is to ensure that all information is cross-checked, and wherever possible stories are supported by interviews with named experts and sources of comment, rather than simply scooped from internet sites.

Publications:

General techniques for journalists searching for information online are set out in an online presentation in the Centre for Investigative Journalism (City University, London) guide to online investigative journalism by Malcolm Dick available online:

http://issuu.com/tcij/docs/cij_investigative_online_search

Reuters offers a **Health News** page <http://www.reuters.com/news/health> and Internet Health Watch - <http://www.reutershealth.com/ihw/>

Sources:

Each country will have its own range of internet sources, of varying levels of credibility. Be especially cautious in using material from blogs where the author is not known and their credentials cannot be checked.

Remember laws of libel apply to information that you take from any internet sources, and that inaccurate information can discredit you and your news organisation.

A number of useful sources with general application available in English include:

- Alphagalileo leading resource with page for European research news
<http://www.Alphagalileo.org/>
- Biomedcentral, providing immediate free access to peer-reviewed biomedical research
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/>
- Cochrane Collaboration <http://www.update-software.com/ccweb/cochrane/cdsr.htm>
- EMEA European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products <http://www.emea.eu.int/>
- Health in Focus <http://www.healthinfocus.co.uk/>
- Healthsites UK - medical and health information for medical and non-medical people
<http://www.healthsites.co.uk/>
- Medline - access to Medline from the US National Library of Medicine
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>
- Medscape <http://www5.medscape.com/default.mhtml>
- National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) <http://www.nice.org.uk/>
- Net Doctor, daily health news <http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/news>
- Quackwatch - <http://www.quackwatch.com/>

Critique:

There are plenty of online sources of poor information, and news audiences may not have the ability to distinguish sound advice or information from misleading reports. It is important to ensure that reporting of medical information maintains the critical criteria, along the lines of the 10 key questions set out by www.healthnewsreview.org.