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## Dissemination of ear, nose, and throat information for GPs in a departmental website

There is a growing demand for web-based information that is accessible and relevant for patients and doctors. Despite the plethora of information available, its quality is not guaranteed.<sup>1</sup> We aimed to identify GP perceptions about the clinical value of such a tool. The Scarborough Hospital ear, nose, and throat (ENT) departmental website was upgraded (<http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/?ob=1&id=95>) to provide information of clinical use in four easy to use links. First we adapted the referral guidelines created at the department of ENT at the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle, with permission.<sup>2</sup> In the second link, 'recommended ENT literature', we suggested a number of evidence-based articles. In the third we introduced the patient information page of the 'ENT UK' and in the fourth a selection of useful ENT websites.

We promoted the site through the hospital communication department, personal e-mails sent to key GPs, including information about it in departmental clinical information letters sent to GPs, and advertising it during a GP ENT study day.

We sent a questionnaire to 100 randomly-selected GPs in the area. Forty-three GPs replied (43%). Nineteen were aware of the website, while 24 were not until they read the questionnaire: 10 of these expressed an interest in using it in the future. From the positive responders, a significant percentage scored the site as very useful. Seven gave it a top score of 5/5, while seven scored it with a 4/5. Most (14/19) felt that the referral guidelines were the most useful link on the site, while there were no votes for the recommended literature. In the question 'did the website change your practice?' one GP gave it a top score (5/5 strongly agree) while ten scored it with a 4/5: 17/19 GPs would recommend it to a colleague.

It is apparent that the GPs who were

aware of the website found it a helpful and valuable tool. There is no general consensus on what material should be included in a web page such as ours, and it may well be that different communities have different needs. Doshi's work<sup>3</sup> concentrated more on the syllabus after a decision was taken to include common ENT operations and emergencies as topics. It did not come as a surprise to us that the referral guidelines were judged to be the most useful part on the site. Despite consistent efforts to advertise, it appears that the promotion of the website was only partially successful. The fact that a number of GPs expressed an interest in the site highlights the clinical relevance and the efforts required for better promotion.<sup>4</sup> In our view the use of electronic communications and websites like these is going to increase. Electronic referrals and virtual clinics have already been piloted and are used in the UK and other countries.<sup>5</sup>

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