Available patient-centered Internet information on peri-implantitis. Can our patients understand it?

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Abstract

Objectives The aim of this study was to evaluate the quality, readability, and popularity of patient-oriented online information about peri-implantitis.

Materials and methods The term peri-implantitis[^] was searched in Google® and in Yahoo!®. The first 100 websites of each search engine were considered for further analysis. Quality was measured by DISCERN tool, and JAMA benchmarks. Readability was analyzed by Flesch Reading Ease Score (FRES), Flesch-Kinkaid Reading Grade (FKRG), Gunning Fog index (GFI), and Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) index. Popularity was assessed by Alexa Popularity Rank (APR).

Results Only 28 websites remained after applying the exclusion criteria. The median overall DISCERN rating was 2.0 [2.0–3.0], which demonstrates the low quality of the information related to peri-implantitis. None of the websites achieved all the four JAMA benchmarks. Legibility indices showed ranges within the scores of difficult to read (FRES, 37.3 [26.9–53.9]; FKRGL, 12.8 [10.5–15.4]; GFI, 15.3 [12.5–18.0]; and SMOG, 11.1 [8.8–13.0]). Median APR was 2,228,599.0 [302,352.0–8,125,885.5].

Conclusions Available English-written e-health information on peri-implantitis is poor in terms of quality and the analyzed websites are beyond the reading level recommended for comprehension. The popularity measurement showed great divergences between different Web pages.

Clinical relevance Information about peri-implantitis on the Internet is difficult to read by patients, which they are not capable of understand.

Keywords Health literacy · Peri-implantitis · Internet · Dental implant

Introduction

Since the beginning of oral implantology, marginal soft tissue has been considered to play a key role as a barrier between oral cavity and peri-implant bone tissue [1]. The control of the inflammatory burden in this biological niche will be a critical point to reach in the longterm success of dental implants [2]. The natural progression of the pathology resulting from the non-control of the bacterial load leads to two conditions known as peri-implant mucositis and peri-implantitis (PI). The consensus report of the 2017 World Workshop on the Classification of Peri-Implant Diseases and Conditions de-fined PI as a pathological condition occurring in tissues around dental implants, characterized by inflammation in the peri-implant connective tissue and progressive loss of supporting bone [3]. Implant dentistry literature shows a great variability in the PI prevalence due to the variety of case definitions. Nevertheless, PI is a common disease in patients who underwent implant therapy. To illustrate this point, in a recent systematic review using a conservative clinical case definition, PI prevalence was 18.5% at patient level and 12.8% at implant level [4]. There is limited evidence regarding the ideal treatment for PI. Clinical evidence suggests that its treatment may be predictable in cases of early diagnosis and prompt intervention. Nonetheless, the decision making in relation to surgical or non-surgical interventions remains unclear and based on empirical approaches, although literature suggests that nonsurgical therapy must precede the surgical management [5].

In current practice, there is a growing demand for oral rehabilitations that often need the use of oral implants. Oral health professionals should show empathy towards patients in order to understand their perspectives regarding this frequently misunderstood outcome. Moreover, they might work on generating protocols to adequately inform patients [6]. Working in the field of PI prevention may lead to a turning point in doctor-patient relationship and also avoid the raise of false expectations and unnecessary communicational problems.

The Internet is currently becoming an emerging source of health information that is used both by patients and health professionals [7]. The introduction of the Internet into the doctor-patient relationship plays a key role in the understanding of current medicine [8]. The clear difference between these two profiles is the critical thinking and knowledge of reliable sources that a health professional can have in opposition to the general public.

According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, three of every four online health seekers use popular search engines such as Google® and Yahoo!® [9]. Internet has an anarchic nature and the lack of search skills during its use can generate serious problems regarding the user's understanding of the disease [10]. The cooperation of health professionals, patients, and the Internet industry is of great importance for the creation of a shared model for the management of e-health information grounded in solid ethics [11]. Specifically in terms of oral implants, the use of the Internet is very common among patients to solve their doubts; in particular, this cliché is ranked as the third most consulted one among patients in relation to oral health [12]. Web-based in-formation available for patients about oral implants has been described as poor in terms of quality and also difficult to read [13]. The poor understanding of patients about PI has also been described and this reality makes them clear candidates to use the Internet as a source of information [8]. Based on this, the research hypothesis is that the quality of patient-addressed online information regarding PI may be difficult to read for the general public and poor in terms of quality. To the best of our knowledge, the analysis of PI Web-based information has not yet been performed. The present research has two aims: (1) to assess the quality, readability, and popularity of the information available on the Internet for patients about PI and (2) to compare possible differences in the information provided by the most popular search engines world- wide (Google® and Yahoo!®).

Material and methods

Search strategy

We performed an internet search for the term Bperi- implantitis^ in October 2017 using the search engines Google® (www.google.com) and Yahoo!® (www.yahoo.com). We used a newly installed browser (Safari, Version 11.0, Apple Inc., Cupertino, CA, USA) with English language settings and included the first 100 search results of each search engine. The websites were displayed (ten sites per page), accessed, and saved in a DVD for further analysis. Exclusion criteria were irrelevant contents, commercial only information, duplicated websites, forums, videos, medical dictionaries, or access to scientific article or abstracts.

Evaluation procedures

The qualitative characteristics of each website were then analyzed. Included websites were

classified as either totally or partially related to PI. Affiliation was classified as non-profit organization, commercial, university/medical center, and government. The content type was classified according to medical facts, clinical trials, human experiences of interest, and question and answer [14]. The presence of the HON (Health On the Net) seal was also recorded. This seal recognizes websites with reliable health information; the principles that must be fulfilled for its assignment are authority, complementarity, privacy, attribution, justifiability, transparency, financial disclosure, and advertising policy [15].

Quality, readability, and popularity

Seven validated instruments were applied to the evaluation of these three dimensions: quality (i.e., DISCERN and JAMA benchmarks), readability (i.e., Flesch Reading Ease Score, Flesch-Kinkaid Reading Grade, Gunning Fog index, and Simple Measure of Gobbledygook index), and popularity (i.e., Alexa Popularity Rank).

The DISCERN instrument comprises 16 items using five- point Likert scales. The first set of items (1–8) deals with the reliability of the publication. A second group of questions (9–15) deals with information on treatment alternatives, and a final item on the overall rating of the content [16]. The quality of information was also assessed using JAMA benchmarks: authorship of medical content (authors and contributors, rele- vant affiliations, and credentials), attribution (list of references and sources of information), disclosure (website, sponsorship, advertising, commercial financing arrangements, conflicts of interest), and currency (content of the published and updated dates) [17]. The review process was carried out independently by two expert observers (AL-P and PC-B), and in case of disagreement, a third reviewer (YL) was involved.

The readability of websites was assessed by automated tools on www.readability-score.com. We used four readability formulas: Flesch Reading Ease Score (FRES), Flesch-Kinkaid Reading Grade (FKRG), Gunning Fog index (GFI), and Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG) index. They were calculated as follows: FRES = $206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{average number of words per sentence}) - (84.6 \times \text{average number of syllables per word})$, FKRGL = $(0.39 \times \text{average number of words per sentence}) + (11.8 \times \text{average number of syllables per word}) - 15. 59$, GFI = 0.4 ((words/sentences) + 100 (complex words/ words)), and SMOG = 1.0430 (square root $30 \times \text{polysyllables/sentences}) + <math>3.129$ [18]. Readability grades according to the FRES are 0-30 = very difficult, 30-50 = difficult, 50-60 = fairly

difficult, 70–80 = fairly easy, 80–90 = easy, and 90–100 = very easy. The text that is graded as Beasy^ by the FKRGL is considered readable by people up to 12 years of age; text graded as Bdifficult^ is suitable for people aged over 16 [13]. GFI scores are 5 = readable, 10 = hard, 15 = difficult, and 20 = very difficult. SMOG index outputs a US school grade level; this means that the average student in that grade level can read the text [18]. The popularity was assessed using the Alexa Popularity Rank (APR) by the automated Alexa Web analytics tool (www.alexa.com). APR is based on a combined measure of page views and unique site users. A low APR means a high popularity.

Statistical analysis

Analysis was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0 soft- ware for Mac (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Median and interquartile range was calculated for continuous variables, after the method of Kolmogorov-Smirnov was applied to con- firm that the data were sampled from a non-normal distribution. Categorical data were reported as percentages (%) and compared by χ^2 test. All tests were performed at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results

The first 100 consecutive websites found by Google® and Yahoo!® were screened. Of these, 80 from Google® and 84 from Yahoo!® were excluded, and another nine websites were detected in both search engines. A total of 27 websites were remaining for analysis (Fig. 1). All included sites were classified according to affiliation, specialization, and type of content (Table 1).

No statistically significant differences were observed be- tween search engines in terms of quality and legibility of the information (Table 2). However, websites retrieved by Yahoo!® showed significantly better rating in information related to treatment options (p = 0.032), consequences if no treatment is performed (p = 0.018), and the benefits of undergoing therapy (p = 0.007) (Fig. 2).

Regarding the HON seal, none of the websites included presented this certification. Google's APR value was 1,810,447.0 [262,065.0–6,586,787.0] and the corresponding to Yahoo® was 2,349,121.5 [412,957.5–8,933,328.2]. No differences were found between search engines (p = 0.719).

Yahoo!® search showed significantly more websites that included information with regard to disclosure of ownership, sponsorship, advertising policies, or conflicts of interest (p =

0.01) (Table 3). In the Google® search, and taking into consideration the 20 perimplantitis websites reviewed, 11 (50.0%) met none of the criteria, seven (35.0%) presented one criterion, one (5.0%) met two criteria, one (5.0%) presented three criteria, and none of them met all four criteria. When Yahoo!® engine was analyzed, and considering the 16 websites checked, four (25.0%) presented none of the criteria, nine (56.2%) met a single criterion, two (12.5%) presented two criteria, one (6.2%) met three criteria, and none of them presented all four criteria.

When all 27 websites were analyzed, the median overall DISCERN rating was 2.0 [2.0–3.0], which demonstrates a low quality of the information related to peri-implantitis. Legibility indices showed ranges within the scores of difficult to read (FRES, 37.3 [26.9–53.9]; FKRGL, 12.8 [10.5–15.4]; and GFI, 15.3 [12.5–18.0]). The median SMOG score was 11.1 [8.8–13.0]. This implies that on average, 11 years of education is needed to understand the majority of the included websites.

Discussion

Recent reports have shown that the legibility and quality of the patient-centered Web-based information regarding oral implants show relevant shortcomings [13, 19]. A recent cross-sectional study showed that three out of four patients were not aware of the implications and significance of PI for implant therapy [6]. BDental implants last forever^ has become an extended health cliché, of which their impact cannot be dismissed [20]. On this line, a recent study examined YouTube® testimonials of patients treated with oral implants concluding that they may have unrealistic therapeutic expectations [21]. Based on the previously mentioned research, PI- affected patients may use Internet as a source of information that can predispose them to be Bonline health seekers.^ Nowadays, anyone can build a website in an area of healthcare in which he has no expertise at all [22]. Consequently, this emergent e-health information must be analyzed in order to ensure its appropriateness for their potential users.

After applying the exclusion criteria described, just 27 Web pages with information on PI for patients were analyzed. Hence, an important finding of the present study was the low number of included websites. On the other hand, from Google's first 10 Web pages, five were selected for further analysis and three in the case of Yahoo's first 10. This is relevant because Internet users usually do not go beyond the first results in the search engine results

page [23]. In the present study, of the websites that met the inclusion criteria, none displayed the HON seal. This does not necessarily imply that the reviewed websites had poor quality. As receipt of this seal must be requested and its accreditation is not an easy task for website builders [23]. Therefore, online health seekers do not have an easy way to identify the quality sites regarding PI. Health professionals must guide their patients in the search for good health information [17].

On the other side, websites do not display high standards of quality according to the DISCERN tool. In addition, the results provided by Yahoo!® are considerably better than those by Google® in some of the aforementioned aspects. The average overall rating (question 16) of the websites included in this study was 2.0 [2.0–3.0]. This is considerably lower than other DISCERN scores showed by websites related to oral and maxillofacial surgery issues like orthognathic surgery [22], dental implants [13], and maxillofacial trauma [24] as well as tobacco cessation [25]. Unfortunately, if this finding is compared with the APR of the included websites, we will observe that those provided by Google® are much more popular than those provided by Yahoo!® and, therefore, more easily accessible for patients. Regarding JAMA benchmarks, none of the websites analyzed presented all four criteria, the one that was less fulfilled by Web pages was the Bdisclosure[^] criterion. Online information about PI is beyond the reading level recommended for comprehension. Our analysis revealed that about 11 years of US school education is necessary to understand the given information properly, while most patient- focused resources aim for a reading grade of 6 [19]. Other studies investigating the readability level of website on oral implants confirmed a similar readability level needed to under- stand the contents [24]. The difficult readability of PI websites observed may be due to the use of complex terminology when describing surgical techniques or naming drugs. Simple word substitutions or using few syllables per word and few words per phrase might significantly improve overall readability [13].

The early diagnosis and treatment of PI play a key role and provide the best treatment outcomes. PI-related risk factors can be modifiable and non-modifiable. Tackling modifiable risk factors such as tobacco and poor oral hygiene would significantly reduce the burden of peri-implant diseases [3]. Although there is a lack of sufficient data, iatrogenic factors such as overcontouring of restorations, implant-malpositioning, or in-

adequate restoration-abutment seating may influence the ac- cess for home care and professionally administered plaque removal. In this sense, a retrospective analysis showed that malpositioning was associated with and increased risk of peri-implantitis [26]. Further research is warranted in order to achieve the best treatment option for PI. Furthermore, the prevention of this chronic pathology is vital to achieve a right peri-implant health. This study has some limitations. First, we only revised Web pages written in English, and, therefore, we did not provide information on the quality of websites in other languages. Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the design, which means that this work is just the reflection of a particular moment and Internet contents are constantly changing. Finally, it is relevant to consider the limitations inherent to the measuring tools used, although they have been previously validated and used for this purpose. After assessing the quality of the content available with PI- related Web-based information, relevant shortcomings were identified. This lack of good-quality information should be an incentive for oral health care providers to guide their patients in their search for trustworthy and intelligible contents. In cyberspace, dental professionals and webmasters should cooperate effectively to prevent and combat this misleading information but also in the creation of new appealing and interactive contents. Future research should contribute towards automated assessment of e-health information. Also, to further enhance our understanding of the current status of PI-related websites, future studies should analyze the

Conclusions

Within the limits of the present study, e-health information about PI could be considered poor in terms of quality. Moreover, the analyzed websites are beyond the reading level recommended for comprehension. These results provide further insight into Web-based information about oral health is- sues and will improve the awareness of Web builders in order to modify their contents making them more suitable for their potential consumers.

Internet usage pattern of patients and its impact on implant therapy and related success.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest. The authors declare that they have no conflict of

Ethical approval. This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed consent. For this type of study, formal consent is not required.

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Table 1. Categorization of sites based on affiliations, specialization, and type of content.

CATEGORIZATION	Google	Yahoo	<i>P</i> -value
	(n = 20)	(n = 16)	
Affiliation			0.10
Commercial, n (%)	15 (75.0)	9 (56.2)	
Non-profit organization, n (%)	4 (20.0)	2 (12.5)	
University or medical center, n (%)	1 (5.0)	5 (31.2)	
Government, n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Specialization			0.76
Exclusively related to peri-implantitis, n (%)	17 (85.0)	13 (81.2)	
Part of website dedicated to peri-implantitis, n (%)	3 (15.0)	3 (18.8)	
Type of content			0.10
Medical facts, n (%)	20 (100.0)	14 (87.5)	
Clinical trials, n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	
Question and answer, n (%)	0 (0.0)	2 (12.5)	
Human experiences of interest, n (%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	

 Table 2.Quality and readability indices of selected websites.

INDEX	Google	Yahoo	<i>P</i> -value
	(n = 20)	(n = 16)	
DISCERN overall rating	2.0 [2.0-3.0]	3.0 [2.0-3.0]	0.20
Flesh Reading Ease Score	33.3 [24.9-49.6]	39.4 [29.2-57.1]	0.24
Flesch-Kincaid Reading Grade Level	13.6 [11.5-15.7]	12.7 [9.4-14.4]	0.30
Gunning Fog Index	15.9 [13.2-18.2]	14.1 [11.3-16.5]	0.18
Simple Measure Of Gobbledygook index	11.5 [9.9-13.3]	10.4 [8.2-11.8]	0.25

Table 3.Website content based on JAMA benchmarks.

JAMA benchmarks	Google	Yahoo	<i>P</i> -value
	(n=20)	(n = 16)	
Authorship, n (%)	3 (15.0)	4 (25.0)	0.45
Attribution, n (%)	5 (25.0)	3 (18.8)	0.65
Disclosure, n (%)	0 (0.0)	4 (25.0)	0.01*
Currency, n (%)	5 (25.0)	6 (37.5)	0.41

^{*}Statistically significant.

Figure 1. Flow diagram of the study.

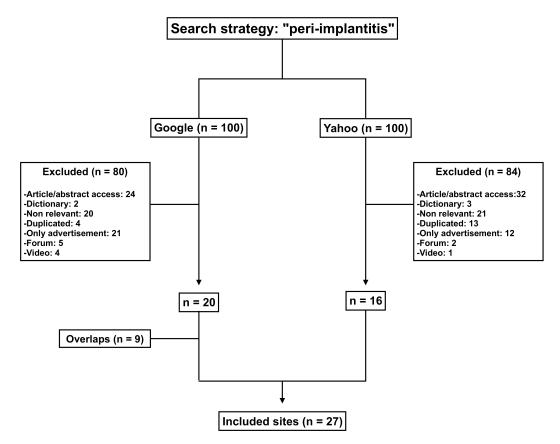


Figure 2. Values of the different items of the DISCERN instrument expressed as median [interquartile range]. Statistically significant differences are highlighted with an asterisk.

