We all want to be able to base our practice on valid information; however, sometimes it’s hard to know which sources are most accurate. Then there’s the problem of finding information that is readily available and easy to use. All these factors come together, often resulting in reliance on internet-based sources for information. While there is sound information available on the web, there are dangers, as well. Content on the Internet is unregulated; anyone can publish anything on the Internet. Each of us needs to be able to tell the difference between the good, the bad and the ugly. The Research & Evidence-based Nursing Practice Council offers this guideline for use in making judgments about Internet evidence sources.

Judgments need to be made in each of these areas:

**Accuracy**

- Can you determine the truthfulness of information provided?
- Is complete information provided?
- Are data objective (rather than testimonials)?
- Is the information source(s) included?
- Does the site identify the author(s)?
- Does the site have an editorial board? Is the information reviewed before it is posted?
- Are there other sources that can be used to verify the information provided?

Webpages with the suffixes .gov (government agency), .edu (educational institution) and .org (American Heart Association) are more likely to provide accurate information than are those sites with .com suffixes.

- Is the page well-organized and focused?
- How easy is it to navigate and/or access the information? If links to other sites are included, are they easy to access?

Webpages that are well organized and easy to use demonstrate that considerable thought has gone into displaying the information, which gives you an idea about the attention to detail of the producers.

**Authority**

- Who is the individual or group responsible for the content? Does the “about us” section tell you about the purpose of the organization?
- Is there a way to contact the organization or webmaster? Is there a physical location for the organization or is an email address all that is supplied?
- Who is the intended audience?

A careful examination of the credential of the individual(s) providing content can give an idea of affiliations (university, professional organization or commercial enterprise). An individual’s blog is less likely to contain sound information than is a report by several authors whose credential suggest they are well-versed in gathering and evaluating information.

Knowing something about the intended audience may give you information about the depth of information (for example – a site for consumer information probably does not give as much information as a site intended for health care providers).

See Next Page
Bias/Objectivity
- Why was the page created? Who provides funding for the site?
- Was the site created to “sell” or persuade the reader about a product or service?
- Is the information showing just one point of view?
- Is advertising clearly marked?
- Do the graphics, fonts, and verbiage play to the emotions? Beware of CAPITAL LETTERS, EXCLAMATION POINTS!!!! Or words like MIRACLE CURE!!!

Sites that are produced by commercial organizations (e.g. drug or device companies) may provide information that is slanted toward their product. In addition, such developers may leave out information that is not useful for their purposes.

Currency/Timeliness
- When was the web page produced? When was the page last revised?

Using “old” information as a basis for practice probably won’t produce the results you desire. Since information on the Internet never goes away, it is important to find sources of information that are timely and regularly updated.

Privacy Concerns
- Does entering the site/page give the owner access to your personal information?
- Are there areas on the site/page that allow you to purchase a product?

A site that enables access to personal information is much more likely intended for some commercial use.

Some reliable information sources include:
The Cochrane Library ([http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html)) is one of the best known sources for health care evidence.

The Joanna Briggs Institute ([http://www.joannabriggs.edu.au/](http://www.joannabriggs.edu.au/)) promotes evidence-based health care resources and is a relative newcomer to the online resource venue; provides evidence r/t nursing & medicine.

UpToDate ([www.uptodate.com](http://www.uptodate.com)) is an evidence-based, peer-reviewed information resource.

The Agency for Health-care Research & Quality ([www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)) is the health services research arm of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

The National Guidelines Center ([www.guideline.gov](http://www.guideline.gov)), a public resource for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, synthesizes the information from research studies, evidence-based practice guidelines, and expert opinions into a guideline on a particular topic or area of interest.

Mosby’s Nursing Consult™, available on SJHMC desktops, provides current information on clinical problems. It synthesizes the literature and provides references

Some unreliable information sources include:

Facebook is a social networking service [http://www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

Any blog which is written from a personal agenda such as  [http://www.blogs.com](http://www.blogs.com); [http://www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com); [http://www.blogspot](http://www.blogspot)

About. Com is a site with original information and advice [http://www.about.com]