Looking for medical research information

How do the public look for information and what are they looking for?

The Monitor has regularly found that a substantial proportion of the public go looking for information about medical research. With the internet and search engines being such major sources of information and advice on illnesses, treatments and statistics, it is important to make online information about medical research accessible, and to signpost web users to credible and meaningful information.

What information?

Of the 42% who have sought medical research information in the past year...

- 69% looking for medical advice
- 48% others’ experiences of illnesses
- 43% data or statistics
- 25% research trials or experiments
- 29% visited GP or hospital
- 72% search engine
- 50% website run by the NHS
- 32% different specific website
- 29% website run by a charity

Accessing information

Of the 42% who have sought medical research information in the past year...

- 90% searched for it online of these, the most common websites used were:
  - 40% talked to another person
  - 72% search engine
  - 50% website run by the NHS
  - 32% different specific website
  - 29% website run by a charity

The Wellcome Trust Monitor is a unique survey of the UK public that is conducted every three years to look at changing knowledge and attitudes to medicine, science and health. For more findings on this topic, you can look in Chapter 2 of the Wellcome Trust Monitor Wave 3 Report (wellcome.ac.uk/monitor). This chapter gives more detail on the findings displayed here and also covers: how many people have come across medical research information without actively searching for it; what medical research information people come across in this way; and where people have come across medical research information in this way.