

Health Website Ratings Instrument (HWRI)

Taxonomy of health websites

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For purposes of conducting the Health Website Ratings (HWR) project, Health Improvement Institute (Institute) has identified the following types of health websites. Some health websites may be a mixture of two or more of the following types, in which case, the primary type is used to classify the website.

1.0 Health communication website (to communicate health information to consumers, health professionals, or other specified groups of individuals), including

- 1.1 *(Health) Website search engine* (to facilitate finding health-oriented websites); includes websites that comprise lists of links to other websites. Note: For this purpose, a "search" function on a website that is limited to the contents of that website does not constitute a "search engine." However, if a website includes a list of links to other websites, it can be classified as a "search engine."
- 1.2 *Health information resource website* (to provide access to such health-oriented resources as library collection, book, and journal articles).
- 1.3 *Health information website* (to communicate descriptions and data to inform decisions regarding a person's or population's health or health care, including interventions to promote health and wellness and to prevent or to manage disease or its effects and treatment's side-effects, including prevention strategies, diagnostic test, all sorts of treatments, and rehabilitative regimens. It may be intended for health professionals or for consumers. Health information is a broad term, and includes news of developments as well as such substantive information as treatments for diseases. It does not include any of the following types of health communication websites. Note: Websites whose primary purpose is to convey to consumers information about prescription drugs (actions, side effects, support line number, etc), whether or not sponsored by a drug company, should be classified as a "health product marketing website."
- 1.4 *Health advice on-line* (to provide on-line answers to health questions and/or support); includes "chat rooms."
- 1.5 *Health ratings website* (to communicate to consumers, health professionals, or other specified groups of individuals information on the performance of health care providers, the quality of health websites, etc).
- 1.6 *Decision support website* (to provide tools to assist consumers, health professionals, or other users to make health care or other health-related decisions, including selecting a health plan or provider and deciding among alternative treatments). Note: For this purpose, a DST is an interactive website that requires the user to input or permit access to data about an individual and once activated responds with a decision indicator or advice based on an explicit or implied expert system or decision model.

2.0 Behavior modification website (to support individuals who want to control or to modify their behavior, eg, stop smoking, loose weight, exercise regularly), including

- 2.1 *Self-help website* (to provide tools to facilitate the change management process).
- 2.2 *Disease management website* (to support interventions that include off-line interactions with health practitioners). Note: For this purpose, mention that the website is part of a "clinical trial" or other research project relating to individual behavioral change, etc should be regarded as a clue that the website is a disease

management website (if it is not a behavioral change website). A website that is a substitute for a facility-based disease management program is considered to be a behavior modification website.

3.0 On-line product website (to communicate health-oriented product information and/or to sell such products to consumers and/or health professionals), including

3.1 *On-line pharmacy* (to purchase prescription drugs on-line). Note: For this purpose, herbal and other dietary supplements are not "drugs." If the website sells on-line drugs and other products, consider it to be an "on-line pharmacy."

3.2 *On-line health store* (to purchase health-related products other than drugs via the Internet)

3.3 *Health product marketing website* (to provide product information and/or refer people to bricks-and-mortar stores and/or health practitioners). Note: For this purpose, websites whose primary purpose is to convey to consumers information about prescription drugs (actions, side effects, support line number, etc), whether or not sponsored by a drug company, should be classified as a "health product marketing website."

4.0 Health care organization website (to communicate information about the organization, institution, or facility), including

4.1 *Health plan website*, including government, employer, Blue Cross Blue Shield, health insurer, HMO and other types of MCO (to inform applicants and enrollees about benefits, premiums, network providers, etc and/or to permit enrolling in the plan, filing claims, etc)

4.2 *Health provider website*, including hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, and other types of health care facilities and agencies, and physicians, dentists, and other types of health care practitioners (to inform patients about services, fees, qualifications of staff, hours of operation, etc)

4.3 *Ancillary health care organization website*, including laboratories, blood and tissue banks, ambulances, etc (to inform users of their services).

4.4 *Health-oriented resource supplier*, including all types of suppliers of personnel (eg, medical, dental, and nursing schools) and products (eg, facility construction, manufacture of drugs, devices, medical supplies, and sundries) to the health care industry (to inform consumers and/or health professionals about the organization and its products).

4.5 *Health-oriented association*, including all types of voluntary organization, charities, education and research organizations (to inform consumers and/or health professionals about the organization and its services).

5.0 Public health website (to inform consumers and/or health professionals about specific public health programs or activities, such as health education, consumer protection, health care product test/safety program, including adverse event reporting, recycling, sanitation or food-handling inspection, environment, including air, water, land, workplace structures, etc).

Note: The focus here is on the organization and its activities; not primarily the provision of health information.

6.0 Research website (to recruit people for clinical/health research studies).

7.0 Other type of health-oriented website (any other health-oriented website not classified above).