

Health Website Ratings Instrument (HWRI)

Development history

Version 2.0; revised July 15, 2006 (HII proprietary document)

Health Improvement Institute (HII) developed the health information website rating instrument (HWRI) in collaboration with Consumer Reports WebWatch (CRW), as follows:

- CRW developed a general instrument applicable to rating all types of websites
- HII compiled a list of criteria that have been used to evaluate the quality of health websites (that consisted of both generic and specific criteria)
- HII assembled a panel of volunteer health professionals ("evaluators") to assess generic and specific criteria for the purpose of rating health information websites
- CRW updated its general website rating instrument based on evaluators' feedback, and consolidated its criteria with generic criteria compiled by HII, to create Part I of version 1 of the HWRI
- HII updated specific criteria for assessing editorial policies and procedures, based on evaluators' feedback, to create Part II of version 1 of the HWRI
- HII/CRW agreed jointly on the contents of both parts of the version 1 of the HWRI
- CRW piloted Part I and HII asked a panel of credentialed raters to pilot Part II of version 1 of the HWRI
- Based on pilot test results, HII/CRW finalized the contents of version 2 of the HWRI, which was used to rate the first wave of health websites (the 20 most-trafficked health information websites)
- Based on the experience gained in using version 2 of the HWRI, HII developed version 3, as follows. The Institute
 - Revised the basic workbook based on raters' feedback
 - Drafted specific criteria for identifying, selecting, and rating diet websites
- Going forward, HII/CRW will periodically review, and, if necessary, revise, the HWRI based on raters' feedback and develop specific criteria necessary for identifying, selecting, and rating other types of health websites.

Changes to HWRI

Health Improvement Institute has made the following principal changes, to the HWRI used to rate the first wave of health websites, to create this version:

- Aligned more perfectly ratings website and HWRI items
- Integrated CRW (general website rating) criteria and HII (specific website rating) criteria, and asked expert raters to apply all of these combined criteria
- Eliminated HII criteria that overlapped with CRW criteria
- Placed scoring and evaluative narratives at the end of the applicable (rather than in a separate) section
- Eliminated redundant narratives
- Created more "white space" to make rating worksheets more user-friendly
- Added and altered "standard" items based on rater feedback
- Added items specific to diet self-help websites
- Where necessary, clarified instructions and explanations.