The Quality of Portuguese Obesity Websites

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to evaluate the quality of Portuguese obesity websites. A cross-sectional, quantitative and observational study was designed. The evaluation of 127 sites found using the Google in “Advanced Search” option “pages in Portuguese”, country “Portugal” was performed. The quality criteria used in this study resulted from the merger/adaptation from several authors previously published. The information on obesity was evaluated according to the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network: Management of Obesity, a National Clinical Guideline, 2010. The quality criteria most mentioned in the websites, were the purpose (80.3%) and authority (73.2%). On the other hand, the editorial review (7.9%) and references (15.7%) were mentioned in the narrowest websites. The websites analyzed had a mean quality score of 5.2 points (± 2.1) out of 11. A significant correlation was found between the score of information on obesity and quality score for adults group (0.282) and both ages group (0.437). In Portugal, the websites that provide information on obesity had, generally, a low quality score.

Keywords: Internet, Nutrition, Obesity, Portugal, Website Quality

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the quality of Portuguese obesity websites. A cross-sectional, quantitative and observational study was designed to fulfill this objective. The evaluation of 127 sites founded using the Google in “Advanced Search” option “pages in Portuguese,” country “Portugal” was performed. The quality criteria used in this study resulted from the merger/adaptation from several authors previously published. The information on obesity was evaluated according to the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (2010).

Data analysis was performed using the SPSS 19.0. A “quality score” variable was computed from 11 quality criteria, and each of these criteria was studied alone and in a descriptive way. To verify the influence of moderator variables on the quality score, a statistical analysis was performed using nonparametric tests, namely, Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon and Kruskal-Wallis tests. Finally, to verify if the accuracy of obesity information score was correlated to the quality score, it was used the Spearman test.

This article is structured as follows: introduction, literature review, materials and methods, results, discussion and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Obesity is the most common form of malnutrition and is the main health problem of the XXI century and the first cause of chronic non-communicable diseases in the world. This results from an imbalance between energy intake and energy expenditure. It is defined as a body mass index (BMI) > 30 kg m\(^2\) and that increased BMI is associated with a high risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes (Kautiainen, Koivusilta, Lintonen, Virtanen & Rimpela, 2005; Manolopoulos, Karpem & Frayn, 2010).

Today, with the rising of obesity rates, the population tends to seek information on features such as web pages which can be proved by the increasing number of websites that provide information on the disease (Silva, Castro & Cymrot, 2008). This source of information is easily accessible and low cost, however, does not guarantee the quality of its content, so it should not be received passively, but critically analyzed considering its qualitative aspects (Silva, Castro & Cymrot, 2008; Costa, Fuchiwaki, Miranda & Halpern, 2005). As result, it is necessary to use criteria that ensure quality information, in particular information related to health (Carvalho, Simões & Silva, 2005).

Several specialists have presented criteria or filters for quality assessment (Lopes, 2004; Sales & Almeida, 2007). The instruments for this assessment are being defined and must be constantly reassessed and adjusted (Lopes, 2004). Frequently, cited guidelines for evaluating health quality information are: Health on the Net Foundation (HON) and the Health Information Technology Institute (HITI). HON’s criteria define a set of rules related to basic principles of ethics used in the presentation of information, namely, authority, complementarity, confidentiality, credit, justification, authorship, sponsorship, publicity. The HITI proposes seven criteria, including credibility, content, presentation of the site, links, design, interactivity and ads (Lopes, 2004; Santos, 2006).

Therefore, the Internet and aspects such quality of information and its influence on the users’ health are very important issues and deserve to be studied.

In this context, the objective of this study was to evaluate the quality of Portuguese websites on obesity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional, quantitative and observational study was carried out to evaluate the quality of Portuguese websites on obesity. A search was conducted using the Google engine (www.google.pt), in “Advanced Search”, option “pages in Portuguese”, country “Portugal”. Keywords used were “obesity and
Vulnerabilities of Virtual and Networked Organizations
www.igi-global.com/article/vulnerabilities-virtual-networked-organizations/75200?camid=4v1a