utmb Health
Moody Medical Library

# EVALUATING HEALTH RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Academic Resources

**The web provides access to large quantities of health information**.

However, in many cases material found on the web is incomplete, misleading, biased or incorrect. Use the CRAAP Test to help determine if the information found is useful/reliable for the question.

## Currency: Timeliness of the Information

- Is the material current? Has it been revised/updated?
- Is it current for your topic?
- Do the links work?

## Relevance: Importance of the Information

- Is the target audience professional or lay? Is the site at an appropriate level for you question?
- Does it answer your question?
- Would you be comfortable sharing the site with a faculty member? Another student? A patient?

## Authority: Credibility of the Information Provider

- Who are the site sponsors and who are the authors of the document? Are they affiliated with any institution or organization? Is this information easy to find?
- Is there contact information available?
- Is there a bibliography or are sources listed in some other way?

## Accuracy: Reliability, Truthfulness, Correctness of the Information

- What is the biologic or physiologic basis for the claims made? Does the information match what you know from other sources?
- Is the information correct/up to date, factual, detailed, exact, and comprehensive?
- Does the Web site make claims about "breakthrough discoveries", secret ingredients or astonishing properties of some product or procedure?

## Purpose: Reason the Information Exists, Objectivity or Biases

- What is the purpose of the site? Inform? Teach? Entertain? Sell? Persuade?
- Do the authors have a financial/political/personal stake in the products/procedures discussed?
- Does the site ask the user to buy anything, send money, or to provide personal or financial information?
- Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

# Validity of Information Resources

The chart below provides a quick reference for critiquing resources and where to search for particular publication types.

| **Background Questions – general information: who, what, when, where, how, why** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Literature:** | **Validity Notes** | **Where to Search** |
| **Books** | ▪ Literature type: Secondary<br>▪ Well known publisher<br>▪ References (and references linked to text)<br>▪ Theories, opinions, etc. clearly identified as such<br>▪ Authoritative author/editor | ▪ Library catalog<br>▪ Online Books:<br>Ebooks (guides.utmb.edu/ebooks)<br>Access Medicine (incl.Harrison's)<br>Books@Ovid<br>Clinical Key<br>PubMed Bookshelf<br>STAT!-Ref |
| **Review Articles** | ▪ Literature type: Secondary<br>▪ Well-referenced | ▪ Medline (PubMed)<br>▪ PsycInfo |
| **Editorials/News/Ideas Articles** | ▪ Literature type: Primary or Secondary depending on what they are about<br>▪ Good for cultural context, professional values, current events, etc. | ▪ Medline (PubMed)<br>▪ PsycInfo |
| **Web Sites** | ▪ Literature type: Secondary<br>▪ Differentiate between Web versions of print and Web pages<br>▪ Consider authorship, sponsorship (profit v. non-profit), bias or stake in claims made, currency | ▪ MedlinePlus (http://medlineplus.gov)<br>▪ Favorite Search Engines |
| **Foreground Questions – patient specific information: PICO (Patient, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome)** | | |
| **Literature:** | **Validity Notes** | **Where to Search** |
| **Journal Articles:** Randomized Controlled Trials, Cohorts, Case Control Studies, etc. | ▪ Literature type: Primary<br>▪ Randomization<br>▪ Patient Selection (clear inclusion criteria)<br>▪ Accounting for patients at study's end<br>▪ Blinding<br>▪ Study Design/Statistics<br>▪ Note that as the quality of a study goes down, the number of studies increase (e.g. many retrospective studies and few RCT's)<br>**Appraisal Worksheets available: http://guides.utmb.edu/ebp/appraise** | ▪ Medline (PubMed)<br>▪ PsycInfo |
| **Systematic Reviews/Meta-analysis** | ▪ Literature type: Secondary<br>▪ Did the review address a focused clinical question?<br>▪ Were the criteria used to select articles for inclusion appropriate? | ▪ Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (Cochrane Library)<br>▪ Medline (PubMed) |
| **Practice Guidelines** | ▪ Literature type: Secondary<br>▪ Differentiate between literature-based and only "expert-panel"-based<br>▪ Were the options and outcomes clearly specified?<br>▪ Did the guideline use an explicit process to identify, select, and combine information? | ▪ Medline (PubMed) (as a journal article)<br>▪ Access Medicine (Quick Reference > Guidelines – Inpatient or Primary Care)<br>▪ Clinical Key |
| **Journal Articles:** Case studies, case reports, unusual happenings | ▪ Literature type: Primary<br>▪ How closely does the case reported match your patient?<br>▪ Not *ideal* for clinical decision making | ▪ Medline (PubMed)<br>▪ PsycInfo |

Research and Article Type Definitions Available Here: https://utmb.us/3fk