

Script – Print - Patient Heal Thyself?

Study says nearly 90% of Americans turn to Google before a doctor

There's lots of good, useful information on the internet. But should it be the go-to when dealing with a perceived medical issue? A lot of Americans think so.

A study by eligibility.com - a benefits promotion website - shows 89 percent of US patients Google their health symptoms before going to their doctor. The study says respondents wanted to find out the severity of their health condition prior to talking with a physician.

With such information readily available at our fingertips, it's understandable. Dr. Syed Zaidi, a family medicine physician with OSF HealthCare Medical Group, says he sees it quite often - even encourages it.

"Primarily, because if it enables them to look into what's going on with them, they're more likely to be compliant with things that are going to help them," says Dr. Syed Zaidi, family medicine physician with OSF HealthCare Medical Group. "As long as I play on the same team as them, I think it's a win-win."

Dr. Zaidi says, however, that people wanting quick answers to their medical or wellness questions, can lead to unnecessary anxiety in some patients that can strain the doctor-patient relationship.

He says the bottom line is who and what are you ultimately going to trust.

"Forget Google, you can go to a textbook, right?", says Dr. Syed Zaidi, family medicine physician with OSF HealthCare Medical Group. "Are you going to trust that or are you going to trust someone who knows how to practice within that book or practice what's on line? So, I would say go with trusting the person who knows how to practice the text."

Dr. Zaidi believes a majority of people using Google to research medical issues are young adults between the ages of 25 and 40.

"Those are going to be the people that don't routinely see their doctor," Dr. Syed Zaidi, family medicine physician with OSF HealthCare Medical Group. "So, it's because they don't have that established relationship. And that's what's key - is trying to get out there and establish that relationship - and having a "go to". Nowadays everyone's got a guy. It's no longer - doctors aren't those guys anymore. So, it's time that you find one of those guys - or gals, or gals."

Dr. Zaidi says there are very reputable medical information websites. He cites Mayo Clinic and Cleveland Clinic. Accordingly, he suggests anyone seeking medical information through the web choose sites known to be based on direct knowledge and research not just an opinion piece about a personal experience.