Health Information Seeking Among Adults Aged 50 Years and Older

Understanding where older adult patients go for health information and how they use this information may help to improve patient-provider communication, reduce health disparities, and improve patients’ ability to take charge of their health.

Facts:

- Among adults aged 50 years and older, 97% are confident they could get advice or information about health or medical topics if needed.
- In the last 12 months, 47% of older adults have used the Internet to look for health or medical information.
- In general, 90% of older adults would trust information about health or medical topics from the Internet.
- Many older adults (61%) do not talk to their doctor about health information found on the internet.
- During the past 12 months, 72% of older adults reported being at least usually involved in decisions about their health care as much as they wanted.

Figures

Summary

When seeking health information, older adults are more likely to go to their healthcare provider than any other source. However, healthcare providers should recognize that in an effort to participate in their own healthcare decisions, patients are increasingly turning to the Internet for health-related knowledge. Older adults are seeking information on health topics commonly discussed with a healthcare provider in the primary care setting. It is important for healthcare providers to talk to patients about health information sources in order to address issues such as the quality and appropriate interpretation of health information available online.