SNAPSHOT

Just Looking: Consumer Use of the Internet to Manage Care

2008
Introduction

A recent Pew Internet and American Life survey showed that 80 percent of consumers search the Internet for health-related information. Yet their relationship to health information on the Web remains a passive one for most. Relatively few patients tap the Internet to manage their care, including scheduling appointments with their doctors, filling prescriptions, or using ratings information to make choices about their doctors or hospitals.

The California HealthCare Foundation commissioned Harris Interactive to survey the state’s consumers to gain insight into who the seekers of health information are, what kind of information they use, and what actions they take after seeing that information.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

• Overall, more Californians are using the Internet than in 2004, especially to locate information about their insurance plan.

• In 2007, 56 percent of respondents went online to find specific information about medical conditions or prescription drugs. But only 13 percent of that group made provider appointments online in the last year and 12 percent reported filling prescriptions online.

• Despite increased overall use of the Web to access health materials, only 26 percent of Internet users surveyed sought out ratings information on physicians or other health care professionals.

• Twenty-three percent of all respondents saw online hospital ratings information in 2007. However, only 1 percent actually made a change in their health care decisions based on the ratings.

These survey findings illustrate that although a large majority of Californians see the Internet as an important source for health-related information, most are still not taking advantage of it as a tool to manage their health.
Internet Access, by Gender and Age, California, 2007

Though in general almost two thirds of the California population reports having access to the Internet, there continues to be a gap for certain populations. Seniors, in particular, are less likely than others to have Internet access.

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
Internet Access, by Income and Insurance Status, California, 2007

Californians with lower incomes and those without insurance are less likely than others to have Internet access.

These segments of the public likely have the greatest need for information that can help them manage their health, particularly in the case of the uninsured, who may not have regular access to health care.

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
Internet Access by Health Status, California, 2007

Californians in poorer health are less likely than those in better health to have Internet access. Californians in excellent or very good health are more than twice as likely to have Internet access as those in fair or poor health.

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
Use of Internet for Care-related Purposes, California, 2004 vs. 2007

% of Internet users who use it sometimes/often to...

- Find information about specific medical conditions/prescription drugs: 51% (2004), 56% (2007)
- Find a physician in health plan’s network: 23% (2004), 32% (2007)
- Find ratings of physicians or other health-care professionals: 19% (2004), 26% (2007)
- Review claims or obtain benefits information: 19% (2004), 34% (2007)
- Fill a prescription online: 9% (2004), 12% (2007)
- Get advice from a physician via email: 8% (2004), 13% (2007)
- Purchase health insurance: 10% (2004), 13% (2007)
- Make an appointment to see a provider: 13% (2004), 13% (2007)

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.

Internet Use to Manage Care
Care-related Purposes

Overall, more Californians were using the Internet in 2007 as a source of information about their condition or doctor, but minor gains were seen in the percent of people who took action online to manage their health. While more than half of respondents sought information on a condition or drug, few filled prescriptions or sought advice from their doctors.
Use of Internet for Care-related Purposes, by Age, California, 2007

% of Internet users who use it sometimes/often to...

- Find information about specific medical conditions/prescription drugs: 52% (18–39), 58% (40–64), 66% (65+)
- Find ratings of physicians or other health-care professionals: 29% (18–39), 25% (40–64), 13% (65+)
- Find a physician in health plan's network: 32% (18–39), 34% (40–64), 22% (65+)
- Review claims or obtain benefits information: 31% (18–39), 39% (40–64), 30% (65+)
- Get advice from a physician via email: 14% (18–39), 13% (40–64), 16% (65+)
- Make an appointment to see a provider: 12% (18–39), 15% (40–64), 13% (65+)
- Purchase health insurance: 10% (18–39), 9% (40–64), 12% (65+)
- Fill a prescription online: 6% (18–39), 17% (40–64), 25% (65+)

Although respondents over the age of 65 are generally less likely to use the Internet to get information on health care, there are two areas where seniors far exceed use rates of the younger population: finding information on medical conditions and drugs, and filling prescriptions online.

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
Use of Internet for Care-related Purposes, by Education, California, 2007

% of Internet users who use it sometimes/often to...

Find information about specific medical conditions/prescription drugs
Grad school 61%
College 61%
Some college 54%
High school or less 49%

Review claims or obtain benefits information
Grad school 48%
College 35%
Some college 32%
High school or less 28%

Find a physician in health plan’s network
Grad school 46%
College 36%
Some college 28%
High school or less 24%

Find ratings of physicians or other health-care professionals
Grad school 33%
College 24%
Some college 22%
High school or less 25%

Purchase health insurance
Grad school 21%
College 10%
Some college 10%
High school or less 10%

Get advice from a physician via email
Grad school 19%
College 14%
Some college 8%
High school or less 6%

Fill a prescription online
Grad school 17%
College 16%
Some college 11%
High school or less 10%

Make an appointment to see a provider
Grad school 16%
College 13%
Some college 11%
High school or less 14%

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.

Overall, respondents with higher education are much more likely than others to use the Internet for care-related activities.
Use of Internet for Care-related Purposes, by Prescription Drug and ER Use, California, 2007

% of Internet users who use it sometimes/often to...

Find information about specific medical conditions/prescription drugs

- All respondents: 56%
- Prescription drugs: 71%
- ERs: 68%

Review claims or obtain benefits information

- All respondents: 34%
- Prescription drugs: 41%
- ERs: 50%

Find a physician in health plan’s network

- All respondents: 32%
- Prescription drugs: 37%
- ERs: 46%

Fill a prescription online

- All respondents: 12%
- Prescription drugs: 22%
- ERs: 16%

Get advice from a physician via email

- All respondents: 13%
- Prescription drugs: 17%
- ERs: 16%

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.

Those with regular prescription drug needs and those who have used the emergency room in the recent past report greater use rates for both information seeking and care-related purposes.
## Awareness and Use of Ratings, California, 2004 vs. 2007

Among all respondents, those who...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SAW RATING INFORMATION</th>
<th>BASED ON THESE RATINGS CONSIDERED A CHANGE</th>
<th>BASED ON THESE RATINGS ACTUALLY MADE A CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health plans</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physicians</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Less than a third of respondents have seen quality ratings information. Even among those who are aware of such ratings, less than five percent either considered or actually made a change based on the information.

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
Awareness and Use of Ratings, by Health Status, California, 2004 vs. 2007

Among those hospitalized in last 2 years, those who…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>BASED ON THESE RATINGS ACTUALLY MADE A CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>2004 28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007 30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among those in fair/poor health, those who…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SAW RATING INFORMATION</th>
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<th>BASED ON THESE RATINGS ACTUALLY MADE A CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health plans</td>
<td>2004 26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007 22%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>2004 14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007 25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even among respondents with fair or poor health, awareness of ratings sites for hospital, health plans and physicians remained below 30 percent in 2007.

Among those who had seen such sites, very low percentages considered or actually made a change as a result of seeing ratings information.

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
# Respondent Profile: Demographics, California, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>% OF RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>n=1,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–39</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–64</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Others (excludes &quot;Decline to Answer&quot;)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school/less</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college (includes Associate’s)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25K</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25K–34.9K</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–49.9K</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–74.9K</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75K+</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The California General Public Survey, conducted by Harris Interactive between November 5 and December 17, 2007.
Acknowledgments / Methodology
The California General Public Survey was conducted by telephone using random digital dialing of sample purchased by Harris Interactive. The survey was conducted between November 5 and December 17, 2007.

• Out of the 1,096 Californian adults who responded to the study, 92 percent (n=1,007) qualified for and completed the 20 minute telephone survey.

• Demographic data were weighted to produce a representative sample of the general population of California.