

Evaluating a health promotion website: smoking cessation



Introduction:

For the purpose of this assignment and based on the webquest, I have chosen Essay 2, evaluating a health promotion website. The current health promotion topic I have selected is smoking cessation. The National Health Service (NHS) has set up a “ Go Smokefree” Services and a NHS smoking helpline plus a website offering free advice on stopping smoking and details of your local NHS Stop Smoking Services (NICE 2006).

The rationale for this choice is that having completed a placement on a respiratory ward caring for patients with many smoking related diseases, it is important for me as an adult branch nurse to discuss health promotion issues, and to be up to date with current information in order to help educate people and allow them to make informed choices regarding their health, especially the health benefits of stopping smoking. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC 2008) states that it is important for nurses to ensure that any advice or information given to patients is evidence based.

Smoking is a long established health hazard and it is the largest avoidable cause of premature deaths in the UK (DOH 2007). It affects almost all branches of nursing because of the wide range of diseases and conditions which it causes. All types of health problems are linked to breathing in second hand smoke, so smokers risk the health of others as well as their own. Almost everyone knows that smoking is bad for their health but despite graphic images of blackened lungs and cancerous growths in doctors waiting rooms and on cigarette packets people start smoking or continue to smoke.

In order to evaluate the information from my chosen website I will be using a framework (Kapoun 1998). The reason for using this framework is because his approach supports the assignment guidelines, which include; an overview of the website; the author's credibility; content accuracy; content objectivity or bias; and the currency of the content.

Accuracy:

Having decided on the subject, smoking cessation I searched the World Wide Web, using the Google search engine using the criteria. I typed in current health promotions smoking, UK search only. This displayed 240, 000 results, the number one return was www.nhs.uk/smokefree and I decided to use this one. The page is produced by the NHS and has no individual author. The website contains facilities for e-mail should you encounter any difficulties with using the website, and a direct contact telephone number for help and advice. The purpose of the document and the reason for its production (Kapoun 1998) is to provide information on the benefits of stopping smoking; it achieves this by offering advice online, and a facility to download inspirational DVDs and stop smoking guides. The website is aimed at providing information for all age groups and sections of the smoking population, with information and support networks available in many languages and formats including Braille. The website also provides many facilities for health care professionals to order various support materials like leaflets. In distinguishing between the author and the webmaster (Kapoun 1998) the author of the site who produces the content of the web page is the NHS, but the site webmaster who maintains the website is not shown as a separate body. The NHS as the major health care provider in the UK is more <https://assignbuster.com/evaluating-a-health-promotion-website-smoking-cessation/>

than qualified to write this document (Kapoun 1998) as they have access to all departments of health information and resources, plus government statistics and strategies.

Authority:

As discussed in the previous subheading the website publisher is not shown separately from the webmaster, but the copyright is held by the Department of Health (DOH 2007) for which no address is shown. The URL address is www.smokefree.nhs.uk and the domain is www.nhs.uk which clearly shows the document is published in the United Kingdom. The publisher does not list any qualifications but the pre-eminence of the NHS would lend authority to the document.

Objectivity:

The website does achieve its goals (Kapoun 1998). It achieves its objectives by making available information on the benefits of stopping smoking, the health risks and financial costs of continuing to smoke. For example the online calculator shows that the cost of smoking 40 cigarettes per day is £300 per month, or £37,000 over the next twenty years. The information is very detailed and explained in ordinary non-medical terms, making it easily readable for the average person. The website was obviously non-commercial, there was no external advertising, and the motives of the website were very clearly aimed only at dissuading people from starting to smoking and persuading them to stop. I feel that the NHS website was an excellent source of information; it had links to the national statistics website and links to the DOH website which clearly stated that it was a department <https://assignbuster.com/evaluating-a-health-promotion-website-smoking-cessation/>

of the government with ministerial responsibility, which clearly adds to its authority (Kapoun 1998). It had content for the layman seeking assistance to stop smoking, through to professionals, planning local and regional smoking cessation initiatives. In my opinion this website gave an objective point of view, because it presented the facts, the options, costs, the health risks and benefits without being judgemental, or biased against the smoking minority. By comparison, the Action on Smoking and Health (Ash) website presented its information in a more opinionated manner, the website had the feel of a crusade about it, rather than persuasion and offering information and support, it seemed to portray smokers as victims of the tobacco industry incapable of free choice. The website gives information on stopping smoking, and the benefits and aids to quitting, but the website feels like an anti-tobacco company campaign rather than a website promoting the benefits of stopping smoking. The website did not seem objective, as it presented its information and statistics in a more judgemental and biased manner. The contents of this website whilst containing information on ceasing smoking and the benefits of ceasing smoking appeared mainly political with a motive of banning the sale of tobacco. I feel that this website had a totally negative approach to dissuading smokers, and more of a dictatorial outlook. In further comparison the Nicorette. co. uk appeared factual in as much as it offered similar statistics as the NHS website but in a much simpler format. The information was easy to read, but it was aimed only at the general smoking public. Although it gives you the possible health benefits, and the costs of smoking which are in agreement with the NHS website, it is clearly a commercial website, promoting its own nicotine replacement therapies, although they do state on all their web pages, that stopping smoking “ does <https://assignbuster.com/evaluating-a-health-promotion-website-smoking-cessation/>

require willpower”, which would infer that the products advertised are only an aid and not a cure. Unlike (ASH) the content of the website does not criticise smokers or the tobacco companies, however as a commercial entity, it would not be in their commercial interest if tobacco was banned which may show an unspoken bias in favour of tobacco.

Currency:

The website appears to be up to date as it was set up at the start of the NHS “ smokefree” campaign in 2007, although no specific update information available. All of the links were working and appeared to be updated regularly, as there was information on all current campaigns for February 2009 (Kapoun 1998). A current campaign dated 2nd February 2009 is designed to make the consequences of smoking during pregnancy more personal by explaining how smoking deprives the baby of oxygen and causes the babies heart to beat faster (DOH 2008).

Coverage:

The website appears to be almost completely self contained with very few external links (Kapoun 1998). The whole document appears to be very well balanced with images, videos text and graphics. For example, several television celebrities after being given advice and support from local NHS stop smoking advisers have recorded video diaries of their personal experiences of stopping smoking, which are available to view online, or you can also order a DVD free of charge. There is no special software requirements needed to view the information on the website, no browser

recommendations are given, nor are there any fees payable to use the website, plus all downloads and promotional material is free (Kapoun 1998). There are accessibility options of large text for people who are visually impaired. The information on the website is mainly in the public domain, meaning there is no copyright, and no citations are shown.

Conclusion:

First impressions of the website were very positive and this carried on through as I read the material and followed the links. The website is well presented and all the links worked, the website was easy to use, interesting and catchy. There is a wealth of information on the effects of smoking, social effects (stains your teeth and clothes smell), the effects on other peoples health (second hand smoke), the financial costs (to the smoker) and not least the huge negative effects on the smoker's health. The website equally promoted the enormous benefits to be gained by stopping smoking, even after many years of smoking. All information downloads, and promotional material is free. There are telephones lines for help and advice; addresses for regional centres were also available. I thought the website would be of great assistance to many people who genuinely wanted to quit smoking, the support and advice offered was very comprehensive, and also had facilities for health care professionals, service providers and employers on how to refer smokers to NHS services, support smokers in stopping, and plan the delivery of smoking cessation services (NICE 2008). The website policy and privacy guidelines were difficult to find via the page links, but they could be found easily by using the search facility, if you could find the correct keywords. In my opinion the information was accurate, reliable, and the <https://assignbuster.com/evaluating-a-health-promotion-website-smoking-cessation/>

source, Department of Health (DOH), which is a Government Ministry, is trustworthy.

On writing this assignment I have improved my knowledge and understanding regarding website evaluation. As a student nurse, and to offer evidence based health promotional information to patients, I realise how important it is to research the information, making sure it is current, checking how often it is updated, how reliable the information is, does it come from a credible source, can the reader trust the information (Kapoun 1998).

I will take with me into future practice the knowledge that, before I provide any information to patients, it has been critically evaluated, in order for them to make informed choices regarding their health care.

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