Demystifying Cancer and Engaging Patients through Information Technology

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BACKGROUND: Technological evolution, equipment modernization and internet accessibility are contributing to the increase of Information Technology, especially in the oncology area, where patients and family members are eager for information.

However, the exponential growth in the amount of information does not guarantee the quality and responsiveness of it, highlighting the inadequacy and inappropriateness of information as a cause of fear, insecurity and even lack of commitment to treatment.

METHODS: Websites (10) of renowned oncology world hospitals were analyzed in Normative Descriptive Model.

The Descriptive Model contemplates the existence and specificity of the areas: Lexi-Visual Content, Organic Search and Advanced Search (Yes/No).

The Normative Model was based on principles and heuristics proposed by Ergonomics Areas, Human-Computer Interaction and Information Design: Information Structure, Simplicity, Clarity, Unity, Usability and Acessibility (Appropriate/Partially Appropriate/Inappropriate).

RESULTS: 80% of the evaluated websites do not have Lexi-Visual Content. 100% do not have Organic Search. 90% do not have Advanced Search.

None of the analyzed sites comply with the adequacy of the Normative Model. 40% of the websites do not comply with usability principles and 100% do not comply with accessibility principles (even excluding patients who became disabled by cancer).

The increase in the search for information is a natural trend of Information Technology advancement. Whereas cancer patients are more likely to be involved in the treatment of other chronic disease groups (The Center for Studying Health System Change, 2010), there is the need to improve the websites of Oncology Hospitals.

The appropriate production of information facilitates learning, providing greater identification, understanding, and ensuring the message quality.

All Information Technology resources should have as its main goal to assist the understanding of treatment, which is assumed to be humanized and effective, meeting the needs, providing relief and improving the patient and family quality of life.