10 Online Health Resources to Recommend to Patients
Dr. Google's not all bad. But even if you're sold on the 24/7 availability of healthcare information online, the never-ending breadth of data out there is actually part of the problem. How are patients to find and discern what is truly valuable from it all?

By recommending the following resources to patients, you and your staff can both encourage patients to be self-empowered and deter them from being taken advantage of by (sometimes purposefully) inaccurate online advisers.
HHS estimates about one-third of Americans have limited health literacy, defined by the Institute of Medicine as "the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions."

For that reason, it's critical to provide patients with health resources that provide vetted, easy-to-read, and easy-to-understand information.

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine recommends several resources. Topping its list: MedlinePlus, by the U. S. National Library of Medicine of the National Institutes of Health.
Many patients take the health information found in consumer magazines and mass websites to heart. But registered nurse and patient advocate Teri Dreher says much of this information is not credible.

"I advise patients to consult the National Institutes of Health website for health information and Drugs.com for medication information," Dreher said. "And to ask their doctor for recommendations on where to read up as well."
The A venerated online resource run by HHS' Office on Women's Health, WomensHealth.gov stands out for aggregating the latest women's health information in a consumer-friendly format.

A-to-Z topic pages, fact sheets, and reports are easy to find and access. There's even a page dedicated specifically to advising physicians on how they can use the site to benefit patients.
An oft-cited go-to source is HopkinsMedicine.org, by Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore, one of the country's oldest and most revered medical institutions.

The site's homepage provides a "Find Health Information" tab, which combines links to further topical reading and educational videos for both patient and professional.

Also front-page-featured: Johns Hopkins Medicine's Facebook and Twitter feeds, for the full social media effect.
One of the first of its kind, MayoClinic.org, produced by the multi-campus Mayo Clinic and Mayo Clinic Health System, has been winning Internet awards since 2001. Its "old school Web" appearance is deceiving — it could be that some patients prefer fewer visual bells and whistles in their online research, and the content here is rich.

The site's "Patient Care and Health Information" section culls and collates patient guidance on hundreds of health topics, spelling out everything from symptoms and causes to diagnosis, treatments, and even related recommended lifestyle changes.
Global information services company Wolters Kluwer Health has provided this clinical decision-support resource for more than 20 years. Its content is physician written, edited, and peer-reviewed, making it a top-of-the-list resource for OB/GYN Olga Cortez, director of Crossroads Womens Health in Texas.

"This is actually an online reference for physicians to stay 'up to date' with the latest medication information, but it also has a solid section for patients," said Cortez.
A new source on the block, Medivizor is connecting the Web 2.0 dots for patients, caregivers, and physicians, offering personalized, free services primarily aimed at those with serious or chronic medical conditions. The startup is one of those innovative, eclectic blends of medicine and technology, and has thus far found partners in a number of solid institutions, including Weill Cornell Medical College and New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

The service is in public beta (which means it's testing out or piloting services) with a mission of providing physician-backed guidance to the best information available on the Internet about specific diseases, the latest relevant research, and even clinical trials. Patients sign up to receive tailored information that is digestible by the public; for example, a patient may receive an e-mail about groundbreaking research summarized at a 10th-grade reading level.
As the aging patient population looms ever larger, having a paraprofessional around to guide some individuals through the healthcare journeys is quickly growing in popularity at practices and other health systems. Often these individuals are known as patient advocates.

The field of patient advocacy is just a decade old and is booming, particularly since the Affordable Care Act. About 20 universities now offer graduate certificate programs. There are two leading trade associations, the National Association of Healthcare Advocacy Consultants, which provides a "Find an Advocate" tool, and The Alliance of Professional Health Advocates, whose AdvoConnection Directory does the same and provides tips on finding the right advocate and useful resources.
In workshops for physicians, patients, and other stakeholders, Carlo Bezos Daleske encounters everything from anti-Internet doctors to those he calls "true 2.0 professionals, people who empower their patients and encourage them to be active about their health."

From the studied perspectives of business, anthropology, and healthcare, Daleske, the manager of innovation and patient experience for IVF-SPAIN, recommends investing time and effort to develop a reference website (or adding a reference page to your own website) — on a specific disorder or treatment — that assures your patients will find the most accurate information on the Internet.