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# Information Seeking Behavior of Providers in Surgical Specialties at a Community Academic Medical Center

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## Introduction

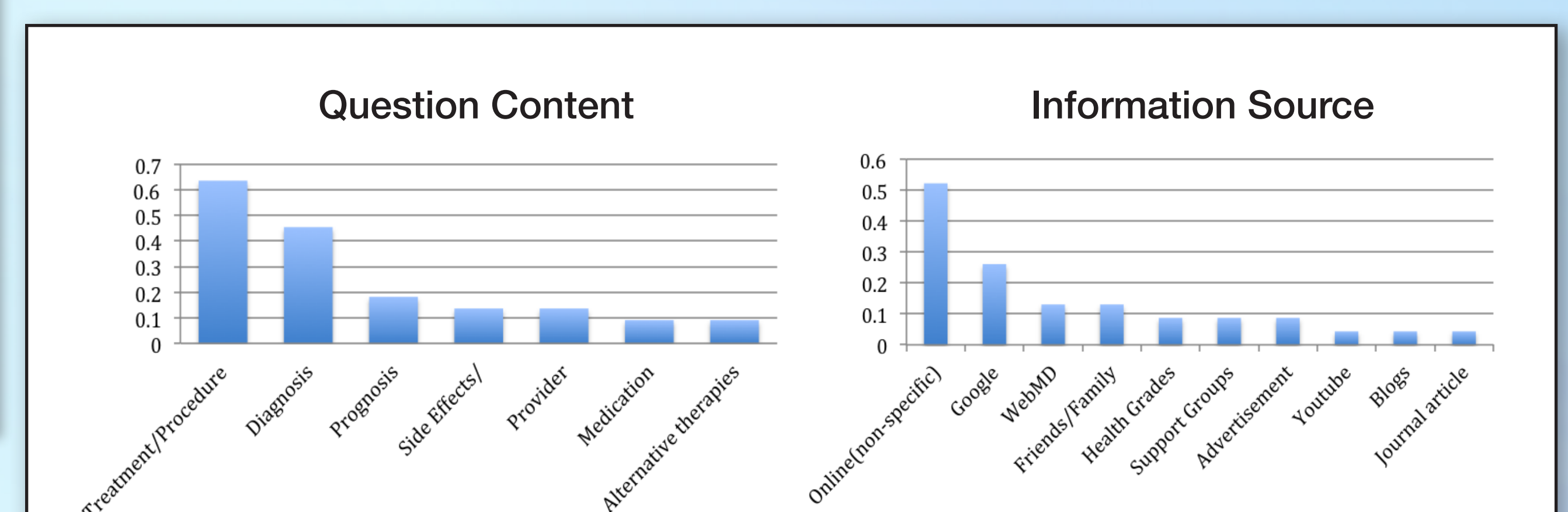
- By 2020 medical knowledge is expected to double every 73 days.
- 41% of surgical patients use the internet to search for medical information, and
  - One study showed up to 60% of patients don't share this search with their medical providers.
- With more informed patients, more information to learn, and less time, it is important for surgical providers to find and assess quality resources that are easily accessible and effectively communicate their findings with patients.

## Results

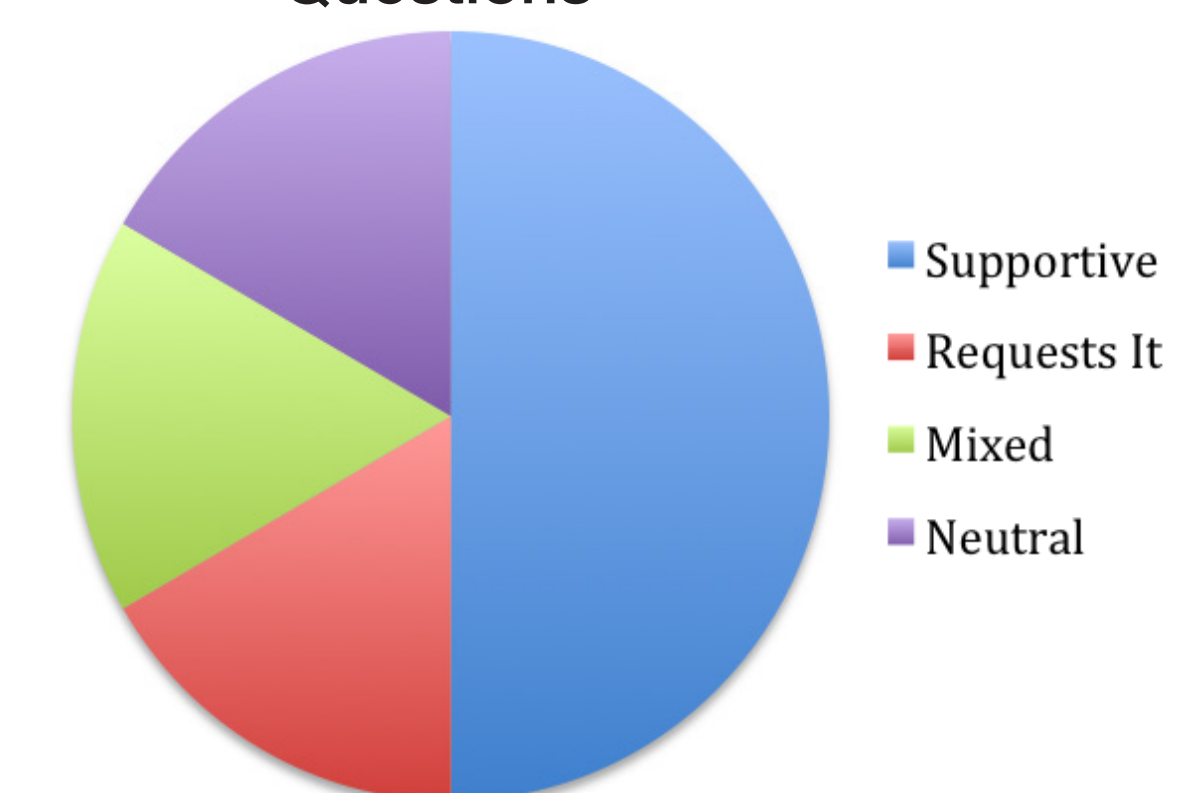
An interim, single coded analysis of answers from 24 surgical providers across 12 specialties at LVHN was collected, with demographics shown in Table 1. Providers saw an average of 218 patients per month (range 30-600), and an average of 16% brought along searched information (range 1%-50%). Charts 1 - 3 display information regarding patient questions. Chart 4 shares how providers search for information, and Chart 5 reveals how they assess the credibility of the information they find.

Table 1. Provider Demographics

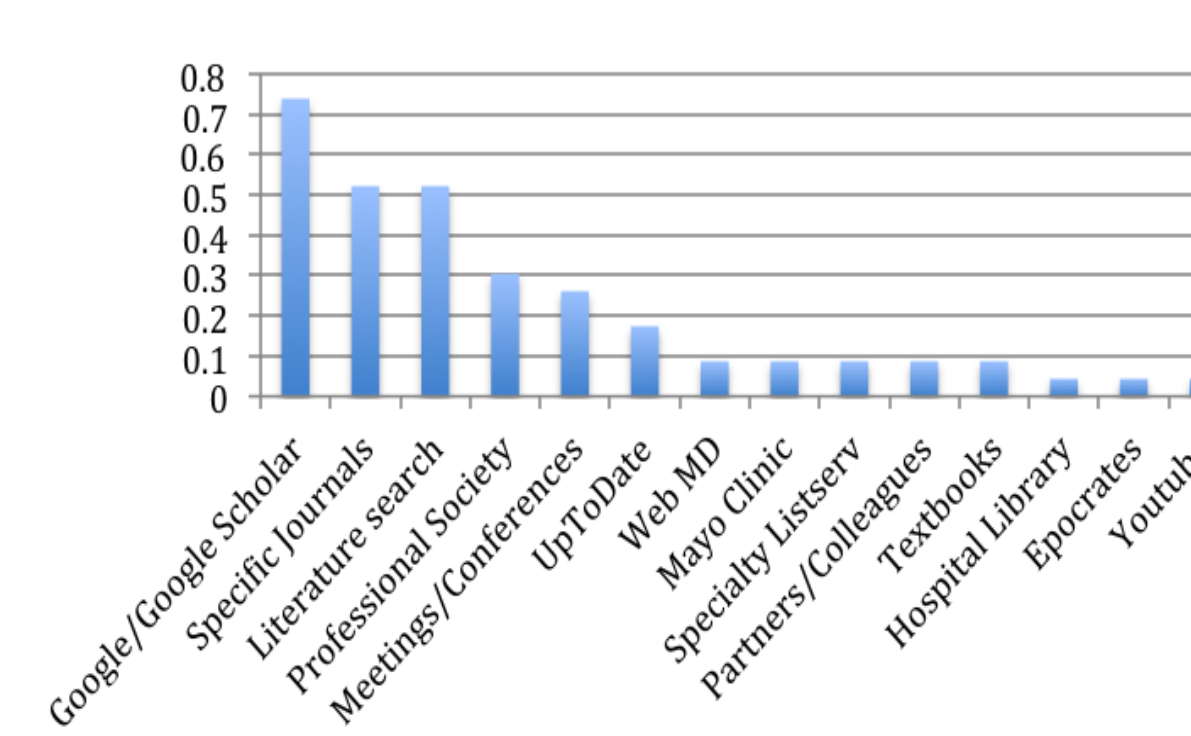
Characteristics	Value
Gender	20 Male, 4 Female
Years in Practice	3-28 (avg. 14.8)
Country of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21 United States</li> <li>3 International (St. Marten, Grenada, India)</li> </ul>
Provider Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21 Physicians</li> <li>3 Physician Assistants</li> </ul>



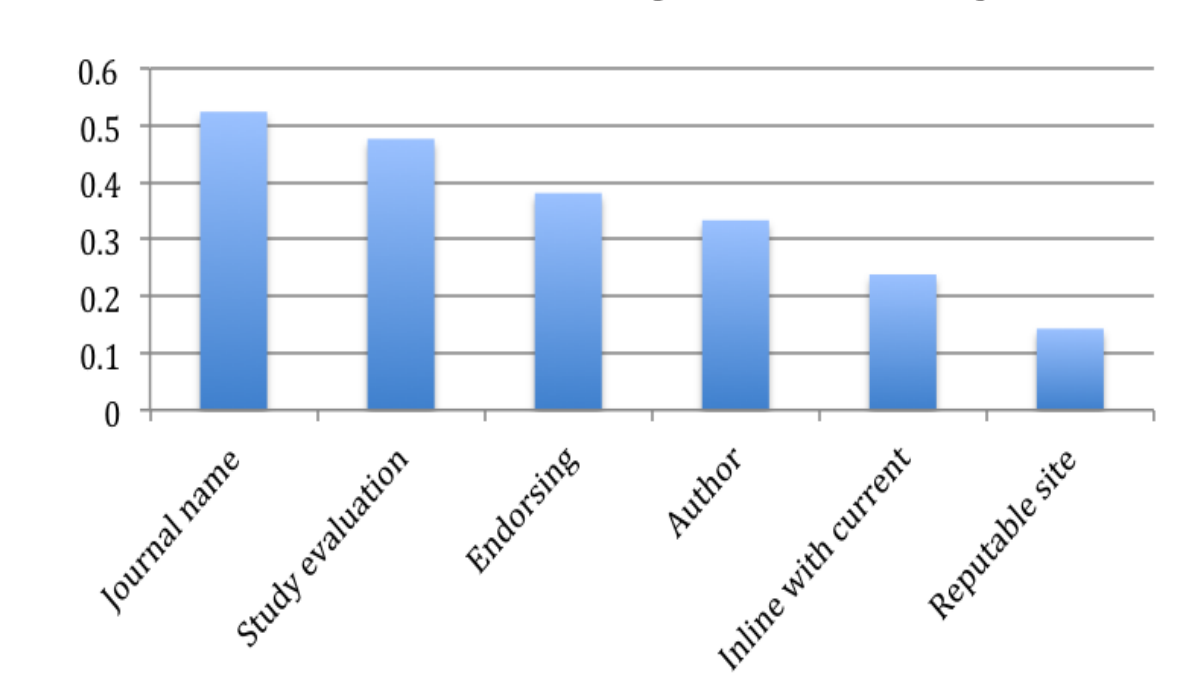
Provider Response to Patient Questions



Provider Information Resources



Determining Credibility



**Appendix 1**

What year did you graduate from medical school?

What year did you complete your last training (e.g., residency, fellowship, etc.)?

In which country is your medical school located?

What is your specialty?

What is the average number of patients you see every month?

What is the average number of patients per month that bring along searched information during visits?

When patients bring information during a consultation, what is it about? Probe further if it is about treatment, diagnosis, prognosis, etc.

What is the typical source(s) of information patients generally bring during visits? Can you give an example?

What is your reaction to patients bringing searched information during consultation? Probe further whether it is frustration, motivation, anger, etc.

What type of response do you get from patients when you do not support their sources? Probe further whether it is frustration, motivation, anger, etc.

What kinds of questions do patients typically ask on benefits and harms of treatments?

How much time on average do you spend discussing the information brought by the patients? Probe further if it is too time consuming, would be better if more time was available, etc.

How do you search for information on benefits (e.g., survival, event-free survival, response rate, etc.) and harms (e.g., treatment related mortality and morbidity) of treatments? (Probe further: do they use Google.com, the LVHN library website, DynaMed, or similar software on their phone/tablet/computer, etc.?)

Where do you search for information on benefits and harms of treatments? (Probe for which database, books, journals, etc. they use or if they consult colleagues, explore professional society websites, etc.?)

How do you determine the credibility of the information you accessed on benefits, harms, and treatments?

How do you define reliability?

Do you have any preference for a certain information resource?

## Problem Statement

This study aims to evaluate how providers in surgical specialties at an academic community hospital respond to questions from patients, how they search for information themselves, and how they assess the quality of the information they find.

## Methodology

- IRB approved, educational grant funded prospective project.
- Scripted interview using previously validated methodology.
- Refer to Appendix 1 for a list of asked questions.
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

## Conclusions/Future Implications

Surgical providers at LVHN are mainly supportive when patients bring along searched information, though the frequency can vary widely. Not surprising, the most common questions were about treatment or procedures. Providers most commonly started with a generic online search when looking for information, and many used a combination of the resources provided by their professional society (journals, conferences, websites, colleagues). Surgical specialties are unique fields in that a large portion of their knowledge is procedural and likely to be learned at conferences and in collaboration with colleagues, than in textbooks. It was common to evaluate a study to determine credibility, but the reputation of the journal, organization, or author appeared to be more important to surgical providers at LVHN.

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