

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Empowering patients in the digital age

The modern patient is increasingly informed, arriving at appointments armed with internet research and questions. While this can present challenges, it also offers an opportunity to foster collaborative care.

By guiding patients towards reliable digital resources, physicians can empower them to become active participants in their own health.

Here are three essential online tools that physicians should be familiar with:

Mayo Clinic website

The Mayo Clinic website has long been a trusted source of medical information for both patients and professionals. Its value for patient education lies in its:

- **Comprehensive and accessible content:** Condition guides offer in-depth explanations of symptoms, diagnoses, treatment options, and latest research, all presented in clear, patient-friendly language. This allows patients to gain a deeper understanding of complex medical concepts, facilitating more informed discussions during consultations.
- **Interactive decision-making aids:** Tools like symptom checkers and health calculators can help patients contextualize their health concerns and explore potential treatment pathways. This encourages proactive health management and may even alleviate anxiety prior to appointments.

MedlinePlus

Operated by the National Library of Medicine, MedlinePlus is a treasure trove of evidence-based health information. Key features for patient empowerment include:

- **Multilingual resources:** With content available in numerous languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, and Arabic, MedlinePlus addresses health literacy disparities and ensures inclusivity. This is particularly valuable for serving diverse patient populations and limited English proficiency individuals.
- **Extensive coverage and reliable information:** MedlinePlus provides comprehensive information on a vast array of health topics, from specific diseases and medications to wellness and prevention.

PatientsLikeMe: Harnessing the power of patient communities

PatientsLikeMe offers a unique approach to health education by leveraging the power of shared experiences.

- **Real-world insights from peers:** This platform allows patients to connect with others facing similar health challenges. By sharing their experiences with

treatments, side effects, and coping strategies, patients can gain valuable insights and emotional support, fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation.

These digital tools offer a complementary approach to patient education. By proactively recommending these resources, physicians can empower their patients to navigate the complexities of health care.

Editor's note: The views, perspectives and opinions in this article are solely the author's and do not necessarily represent those of the AMA.