

Vaccine Hesitancy and the Web: An Analysis of Online Resources Cited by Vaccine Hesitancy Blogs

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Although opposition to vaccines is as old as vaccines themselves, in recent years, the vaccine hesitancy movement (often referred to as the anti-vaccination movement) has caused a regression in public health. Western Europe and North America have seen substantial lapses in public safety. One catalyst for the rise of the vaccine hesitancy is the development of Web 2.0. Also known as Participative Web, Web 2.0 has allowed users to create and view inaccurate medical information, and the medical decisions patients make with that inaccurate information can be detrimental. The current research aims to understand how Internet users access information by viewing the hyperlinks that vaccine hesitancy blogs use. Analyzing the number and type of sources used by vaccine hesitancy blogs could aid in understanding how misinformation spreads and how it could be combated. The data reveal that vaccine-hesitant bloggers often view published research. They view the same government information and published articles as the well-read pro-vaccine population. However, these bloggers glean different information from these articles than vaccine advocates. Vaccine hesitant bloggers sometimes view research directly, but often read about websites through news websites or through other independent organizations. Some of these news websites and organizations may explain information incorrectly and lead readers to a warped view of vaccine research. The data may indicate that some vaccine-hesitant bloggers may not be those who are ignorant, but those who have been exposed to the wrong information and duped.