



Quality of information sources about mental disorders: a comparison of Wikipedia with centrally controlled web and printed sources

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Abstract

Background: Although mental health information on the internet is often of poor quality, relatively little is known about the quality of websites, such as Wikipedia, that involve participatory information sharing. The aim of this paper was to explore the quality of user-contributed mental health-related information on Wikipedia and compare this with centrally controlled information sources.

Method: Content on 10 mental health-related topics was extracted from 14 frequently accessed websites (including Wikipedia) providing information about depression and schizophrenia, Encyclopaedia Britannica, and a psychiatry textbook. The content was rated by experts according to the following criteria: accuracy, up-to-dateness, breadth of coverage, referencing and readability.

Results: Ratings varied significantly between resources according to topic. Across all topics, Wikipedia was the most highly rated in all domains except readability.

Conclusions: The quality of information on depression and schizophrenia on Wikipedia is generally as good as, or better than, that provided by centrally controlled websites, Encyclopaedia Britannica and a psychiatry textbook.