



# The Value of the Internet for Improving Healthcare in Older Adults

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Indeed, men of every occupation and condition in life might avail themselves of a degree of medical knowledge; as it would teach them to avoid the dangers peculiar to their respective stations; which is always easier than to remove their effects.

Domestic Medicine, Dr. William Buchan, 1785

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# Introduction



- Health Trends
  - Rising healthcare costs
  - Increasing number and demographics of older adults
  - Focus on consumer oriented healthcare delivery
  - Advances in technology
- Internet and older adults
  - Content reliability
  - Usability
  - Infrastructure
- Future Trends?

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# Health Trends (As of 2004)

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- Demographics:
  - Census data projects a 20% increase in people over the age of 65 by 2030
- Increasing prevalence of age related chronic illness
- Rising medical costs, U.S. is one of the highest cost figures with one of the lowest health outcomes
- 8 million seniors are online but only 66% use the internet for healthcare related research
- The younger generation “owns” the Internet.

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# Elder Technology Concerns

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- Trust, fraud and privacy
- Training
- Access
- Cost
- Physical handicaps
- Organizations/Websites such as these provide opportunities to address elder concerns:
  - AARP, SPRY
  - Web MD
  - SeniorNet
  - Medline Plus
  - Public libraries

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# What is Internet Technology?



- Web Content – “Abilities”
  - Reliability
    - Trust - anyone can publish a web page
  - Readability
    - Language – word choice
  - Usability
    - Vision, cognition and physical impairments
- Infrastructure
  - What is it?
    - Core telecommunications networks (Internet Protocol - IP)
    - Hardware
    - Databases
    - Software

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## Future (written as of 2004)



- Many seniors use the Internet, but only 66% are using it for healthcare research
  - Trust
  - Privacy
  - Technology training and access
  - "TMI" – too much information

*But, the percent of Internet users will likely increase...*

### Why?

- **Trust and privacy issues** may be resolved through legislation and regulation (**NOW in 2009 >> HITECH / HIPAA Regulations**)
- Training and access becomes less of a problem for computer literate baby boomers
- Reliable sources on the Internet will become more well known and trusted

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## Future (written as of 2004)

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- Research and development efforts
  - Telemedicine
  - Smart Cards
  - Patient medical records (privacy)
  - Home monitoring devices
  - Wellness programs
  - Pharmaceutical management programs
  - **AND NOW in 2009 >> Electronic Medical Records**

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## Future (written as of 2004)

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### Bottom Line:

- Health care progress will be driven by consumer demand
- Probable significant changes in healthcare delivery (Now in 2009 >> electronic health records, health data exchanges, HIPAA/HITECH Privacy & Security enforcements, financial penalties for non-compliance by healthcare providers and financial incentives to adopt electronic health records.)
- Additional research and development needed for practical and cost-effective use of technology

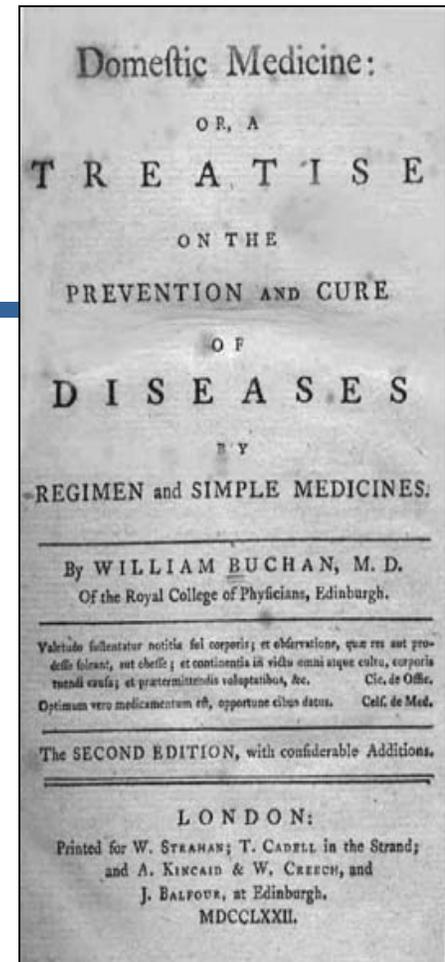
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# The future meets the past

I know it will be said, that diffusing medical knowledge among the people might induce them to tamper with Medicine and to trust to their own skill instead of calling a physician.

The reverse of this, however, is true. Persons who have most knowledge in these matters, are commonly most ready both to ask and to follow advice, when it is necessary.

Dr. William Buchan, 1785



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