

The Challenges of Internet-based Interactive Health Communication (IHC) Applications – A Discussion Based on American Experience¹

Lu, Hung-yi

Graduate Institute of Communication, University of Kentucky

hlu2@uky.edu

Abstract

With the emergence of the Internet-based interactive health communication(IHC), people in the U.S. now can anonymously and electronically gain access to information, solicit physicians' suggestions, find emotional support, maintain health behavior, and make health-related decisions. However, the applications of IHC also raise concerns regarding the lack of accessibility, user-friendliness, readability, accuracy, credibility, and privacy. Based on these experiences, this paper suggests that information providers should make efforts to reduce information divide, create user-friendly Web sites, provide readable materials, supply accurate and credible content, and ensure health-related information seekers' privacy. On the other hand, health-related information seekers should know how to evaluate the IHC applications to choose those, which are most likely to be useful and beneficial to them. Only when health-related information providers provide a preferred future of Internet-based IHC and health-related information seekers know how to

¹ The author expresses thanks to Dr. James Andrews and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments

evaluate and to benefit from the applications of IHC, will IHC lead to desired health outcomes.

Keywords: Interactive health communication (IHC), Public access, User-friendliness, Technostress, Readability, Accuracy, Credibility, Privacy, Confidentiality

[收稿]2003/1/11; [初審]2003/4/19; [接受刊登]2003/5/27