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Designing the Presentation of Hyperlinks to Reduce Overload in Online Health Information (Lightning Talk)

Abstract or Résumé:

This talk will present the results of a completed crowdsourced study with 82 participants. The study was guided by the question: how does the visual saliency of hyperlinks on a health information web page influence perceived information overload, emotional reactions, and task performance? Results indicate that different modes of presenting a high volume of hyperlinks can influence the experience of information overload.

Introduction

Convenient and rapid access to digital information has led to increasing reliance on online health information to make everyday medical decisions (De Choudhury et al., 2014; Song et al., 2021). To help the public solve their health-related questions, government sponsored sites such as Canada.ca¹, CDC², and MedlinePlus³ provide up-to-date and reliable information. However, when people seek information, they pay attention not only to quality and currency (Sun et al., 2019), but also to presentation (Nguyen et al., 2018). A well-designed page can improve the comprehensibility and conciseness of information, increase information-processing capacity, and better support urgent and complex health information tasks (Kurtzman & Greene, 2016; Li et al., 2021).

A high volume of hyperlinks is a central feature of many health information websites. However, existing studies suggest that too many hyperlinks can prompt excessive re-reading (Fitzsimmons et al., 2019), increase cognitive load (Pearse, 2013), and reduce task performance and user experience (Nadkarni & Gupta, 2007; Rotondi et al., 2015). This talk will present the

results of a completed crowdsourced study with 82 participants. The study was guided by the question: how does the visual saliency of hyperlinks on a health information web page influence perceived information overload, emotional reactions, and task performance? Results indicate that difference modes of presenting a high volume of hyperlinks can influence the experience of information overload, which contributes to our understanding of the function of hyperlinks as the most common design element in online health information.

Notes

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2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Retrieved February 4th, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/>.
3. National Library of Medicine. (n.d.). *Welcome to MedlinePlus*. Retrieved February 4th, 2023, from <https://medlineplus.gov/>.

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