

Study highlights gaps in quality of COVID-19 information on the web

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Ever since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March, more and more individuals rely on the internet for the latest information on the virus. The quality of internet-based health information varies wildly as there are no standards for peer review of websites with the potential to provide bad information to individuals seeking self-care.

To examine the quality of health [information](#) related to COVID-19 on the internet, CUNY SPH Professor and Senior Associate Dean of Student and Academic Affairs Ashish Joshi led a study published in the *Scientific World Journal*.

Using the search terms "coronavirus," "coronavirus causes," "coronavirus diagnosis," "coronavirus prevention," and "coronavirus management," Joshi and team narrowed down a unique list of 48 websites. Four independent raters then evaluated the websites using the DISCERN tool, which evaluates the reliability of the information, considers the quality of the information on treatment choices, and assesses the overall rating of the publication on a five-point Likert scale

ranging from one to five. Low scores indicate poor quality of information, and [high scores](#) indicate good quality.

Results showed variation in how the raters assigned scores to different website categories. The .com websites received the lowest scores. Results showed that .edu and .org website category sites were excellent in communicating coronavirus related health information; however, they received lower scores for treatment effect and treatment choices.

"These findings highlight the gaps in the quality of COVID-19 information available on the web," says Joshi. "It emphasizes the need for verified websites that provide evidence-based [health information](#) related to the novel coronavirus pandemic."

More information: Ashish Joshi et al. Quality of Novel Coronavirus Related Health Information over the Internet: An Evaluation Study, *The Scientific World Journal* (2020). [DOI: 10.1155/2020/1562028](https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/1562028)

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