

## AB094. Mesh crisis in inguinal hernia repair? Reliability & quality assessment of current internet information

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**Background:** Mesh-related complications following pelvic prolapse surgery has potentiated societal fear and investigation into mesh use in inguinal hernia repair (IHR) surgery. However concern exists regarding the quality of Internet health informatics. The DISCERN Instrument and HONcode are recommended to assess the quality and reliability of health information online. The aim of this study is to investigate the reliability and quality of online information pertaining to mesh use in IHR surgery.

**Methods:** An Internet search using the keywords: 'mesh', 'inguinal hernia' and 'surgery' was carried out via Google, Yahoo, Bing, Facebook and Twitter. The HONcode and DISCERN scores were generated for each of the first ten

search engine result pages (SERPs).

**Results:** Google provided the most reliable [median HONcode score 77%, interquartile range (IQR) 25.5%] and highest quality information (median DISCERN score 61.5, IQR 18.25). Social media yielded both the most unreliable and lowest quality information. Facebook was the most unreliable (median HONcode score 21%, IQR 14.25%), while Twitter imparted the lowest quality information (median DISCERN score of 18.5, IQR 25.25). The use of mesh in IHR is safe and associated with superior outcomes. However numerous SERPs present results contradicting this, based solely upon level 5 evidence. Alarming as patients carry out a limited search<sup>3</sup>, this low quality, sensationalist evidence may be the only information reviewed. As such this may negatively impact the patient decision-making process detrimentally.

**Conclusions:** Online information regarding mesh repair of inguinal herniae is of variable quality and reliability. Enhanced quality assurance of online health information is necessary.

**Keywords:** Mesh; inguinal hernia repair (IHR); internet; quality

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