

GP Wait Times Drive Rise In 'Dr Google'

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Wednesday, 21 August 2019

Stats Reveal More Than 100Million Health Searches Made Through Google As GP Waiting Times Increase

Press Release

August 2019

- Over 100million health-related Google searches were made in just 12 months
- Mental health is the UK's biggest health concern
- Sexual health is the second biggest concern

With figures suggesting one in four Brits are currently on a waiting list for a GP appointment*, patient consulted Dr. Google more than 100 million times about issues including Anxiety, Schizophrenia and sexually transmitted infections in just 12 months, according to new research.

The data compiled by UK health and wellbeing provider, Benenden Health, analysed more than 8,000 unique health related phrases and questions around the most common ailments and diseases. The findings revealed that Brits made more than 100 million health-related searches over the course of a year.

Among the ailments and diseases mentioned, Anxiety, Schizophrenia and Chronic Depression/Bipolar all came in the top 10 most Googled health concerns for the UK population, making up one quarter of all health searches. Sexual health-related searches were the second most commonly searched, with Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and Thrush also being placed.

This research comes amid growing concern that people in the UK are turning to Dr. Google for self-diagnosis, rather than speaking to a pharmacist or GP. This is supported by a rise in cases of cyberchondria – a state of medical anxiety caused by online symptoms checks which have been predicted to cost the NHS in the region of £420million every year*.

Cheryl Lythgoe, Matron at Benenden Health, comments: "It is of little surprise to see mental and sexual health questions leading the way as comon searches for health concerns. If people wish to use Google for health information or reassurance, we would highly recommend the use of NHS validated websites and to consult directly with a health professional to reach a diagnosis"

The report also showed self-diagnosis was at a peak in London, the Midlands and North West of England, with London alone representing 23% of all search enquiries. Reviewing proportionally, it shows London, Yorkshire and Northern Ireland had the highest number of searches relative to their populations for all health queries included in the study.

Benenden Health has more than 800,000 members across the UK and provides a range of services, including a GP 24/7 and private prescription service and Mental Health helpline. For more information on what Benenden Health has to offer its members, visit:
<https://www.benenden.co.uk/be-healthy/body/dr-google-will-see-you-now/>

ENDS

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Notes to Editor:

- Google search volumes obtained using Google Keyword Planner (August 2017 – July 2018)
- Up to 400 unique search queries related to 27 of the UK's most common health problems were analysed for the research. The topics were split into seven categories, analysing the top three issues in each:

Digestion Heart & Blood Respiratory Mental Health Sexual Health Eating Disorders Women's Health
Old Age
Diarrhoea Heart Attack Cold & Flu Depression Chlamydia Bulimia Menopause Dementia
IBS Stroke Asthma Anxiety Gonorrhoea Anorexia Thrush Arthritis
Constipation Diabetes Bronchitis / Pneumonia Schizophrenia Syphilis Body Dysmorphia Endometriosis
Osteoporosis

- For the purposes of the research, Cancer was not included in the final analysis due to there being a large variance in different cancerous strains. To have included Cancer would have impacted the results in other categories and not shown a true picture.
- 24.6% of 2,000 UK adults surveyed by OnePoll in February 2019 were found to be on a waiting list for a GP appointment
- Online symptom checks predicted to cost the NHS around £420 million every year:
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/mind/dr-google-will-see-now-day-life-cyberchondriac/>
- Benenden Health is a not-for-profit organisation founded in 1905 and based in York since 1990. It is one of the UK's longest serving and most respected mutual healthcare societies.
- The Society has over 800,000 members - including 30,000 who have membership as part of an employee benefits package - and provides a range of discretionary healthcare services open to all.

Appendix

Rank	Category	Topic	Total Searches	Percentage of Total Searches
1	Mental Health	Anxiety	11,516,640	10%
2	Heart & Blood	Diabetes	10,073,640	8.8%
3	Mental Health	Schizophrenia	9,036,480	7.9%
4	Mental Health	Chronic Depression / Bipolar	8,183,040	7.2%
5	Sexual Health	Thrush	5,880,600	5.2%
6	Heart & Blood	Heart Attack	5,622,840	4.9%
7	Sexual Health	Chlamydia	5,610,360	4.9%
8	Sexual Health	Gonorrhoea	5,336,520	4.7%
9	Old Age	Arthritis	5,278,800	4.6%
10	Respiratory	Cold & Flu	5,101,200	4.5%