Informing Design of Clinical Trials Website

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Abstract: Lack of knowledge and awareness about clinical trials is a significant barrier to clinical trials participation. Several websites have been developed to inform individuals about clinical trials and to assist in finding clinical trials for which they may be interested in volunteering. However, these websites may be difficult for individuals to navigate and use. The authors present findings from a usability evaluation of a clinical trials website that offers individuals access to information about participating in clinical trials, a decision aid, and a search tool to find clinical trials. The objective of the study was to assess the usability of this patient-centered clinical trials search and educational website in terms of navigation, content, and layout. Ten adult cancer patients, with moderate-to-high health literacy and Internet experience, performed information seeking and information understanding tasks using different device types (desktop and mobile). Their interactions with the website were captured using the "think aloud" protocol. Eye tracking was used to help identify and diagnose usability issues. After completing the tasks, research personnel conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant to assess their experience with the website. Content analysis of the transcripts from the "think aloud" sessions and the interviews was conducted to identify themes related to navigation, content, and layout of the website. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize performance and satisfaction data. Overall, all participants were satisfied with the purpose and aesthetics of the website across platforms. However, participants experienced difficulty in understanding clinical trial study descriptions and using the search tool to find trials. Participants also experienced issues with website navigation, information organization, and design saliency across platforms. Based on the experiences that were reported, we developed design guidelines for search, layout, navigation, and visual design of clinical trial websites.