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## Is advertising on Google beneficial in searching for patient information on skin cancer?

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**Aims:** Advertising is a major source of revenue for popular search engines such as Google. Skin cancer is the commonest form of cancer and can cause anxieties amongst patients in whom it is suspected or diagnosed. We investigated whether advertising found on Google during the search for patient information on skin cancer was beneficial to patients.

**Methods:** The term 'skin cancer' was searched using Google Chrome, in 'Incognito' mode, with the cookies preset turned off. Advertisements from the first ten pages of results were included, without exclusion for analysis. We analyzed the country of origin, type of organization and what information could be gathered about skin cancer within the first 5 links. The websites were then analyzed for their ease of gathering basic information on skin cancer – types, prevention, symptoms, diagnosis, staging, treatment – and whether evidence was cited. Individual website traffic was gathered using SimilarWeb and analyzed.

**Results:** A total of 35 advertisements from 16 unique websites were found in the first ten pages visited. The most frequently advertised website was Macmillan (8 times). Nine websites were of charities or non-profit organizations, 4 from other search engines and 2 from media. The majority of the websites


were UK-based, while the remaining was from the United States of America, Republic of Ireland and Canada. Basic information on skin cancer was not available in majority of the websites behind these advertisements. 18.8% (n=3) of the websites were unrelated to skin cancer and 6.3% (n=1) led to webpage that was not found (Error 404). In November 2016, the traffic from internet users from the UK on advertised websites was an average of 901990 visits each, and this represented 7.8% of the total global traffic. An average of 2.8% of these visits was found to be from users clicking on advertisement.

**Conclusions:** We found that the majority of websites were unable to provide sufficient information to patients regarding skin cancer. This brings into question the benefits to the patient of advertising by search engines. Advertising on Google results in a significant number of visitors from the UK. It is therefore important that accurate information is displayed on these websites.

### Speaker Biography

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