



## The internet as a source of information used by women after childbirth to meet their need for information: A web-based survey



J. Slomian, PhD Student<sup>a,\*,1</sup>, O. Bruyère, PhD<sup>a,b,2</sup>, J.Y. Reginster, MD PhD<sup>a,3</sup>,  
P. Emonts, MD PhD<sup>c,4</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Public Health, Epidemiology and Health Economics and Support Unit in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of Liège, Liège, Belgium

<sup>b</sup> Department of Sport Sciences, University of Liège, Liège, Belgium

<sup>c</sup> Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, CHU Liège, Liège, Belgium

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Postpartum  
Need for information  
Internet  
Decision making  
Web-based survey

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** the aims of this survey were: (a) to evaluate the need of information after childbirth and what questions do ‘new’ mothers ask themselves; (b) to assess why and how women use the Internet to meet their need of information; (c) to describe how the respondents evaluate the reliability of the information found; (d) to understand how the information found on the Internet affects women’s decision-making; and (e) to appreciate how health professionals react to the information found by the women.

**Design:** this study used a large web-based survey that was widely broadcasted on various websites and social networks.

**Setting and participants:** belgian women who had a child under 2 years old and who agreed to participate were included in the study.

**Findings:** 349 questionnaires were valid for analyses. After childbirth, 90.5% of women admitted to using the Internet to seek information about themselves or about their baby, regardless of socioeconomic status or age. There were various reasons for seeking information on the Internet, but the most frequent reason the women expressed was to find information ‘on their own’ (88.1%). The most searched for topic was breastfeeding. The women believed that the information was quite useful (82.7%) but they assigned an average score of 5.3 out of 10 for the quality of the information they found on the Internet. Approximately 80% of the women felt that the Internet helped them control a decision that they made ‘a little’, ‘often’ or ‘very often’. Professionals are not always willing to talk about information found on the Internet with mothers. Therefore, many women believed that health professionals should suggest reliable Internet websites for new mothers.

**Conclusions:** the integration of the Internet and new technologies could be a useful tool during postpartum management.

### Introduction

Currently, there is no need to be an expert in information technology to realize that the Internet is overly present and used in our daily life (Ethgen et al., 2016). Connecting to the Internet to communicate or seek information, should it be for private or professional purposes, has become a daily reflex. Internet usage is increasing heavily as more and more people have access to it (Dubowicz and Schulz, 2015). Indeed, in 2015, 75.0% of Belgian people (versus 61.7% in 2014) said that they had access to the Internet at home because they

wanted to inform themselves (SPF Economie - Baromètre - Ménages et individus, 2016).

During pregnancy, (future) mothers seem to have a hunger for information (Larsson, 2009; Lagan et al., 2010, 2011). Several studies showed that pregnant women are turning more and more to the Internet for information during pregnancy (Lagan et al., 2006; Romano, 2007; Lagan et al., 2011). The Internet is often the first source to check for information about pregnancy but also before making decisions about pregnancy or childbirth (Forkner-Dunn, 2003; Dickerson et al., 2004; Lagan et al., 2010).

\* Correspondence to: CHU - Sart Tilman, Quartier Hôpital, Avenue Hippocrate 13, Bât. B23, 4000 Liège, Belgium.

E-mail addresses: [jslomian@ulg.ac.be](mailto:jslomian@ulg.ac.be) (J. Slomian), [olivier.bruyere@ulg.ac.be](mailto:olivier.bruyere@ulg.ac.be) (O. Bruyère), [jyreginster@ulg.ac.be](mailto:jyreginster@ulg.ac.be) (J.Y. Reginster), [patrick.emonts@chu.ulg.ac.be](mailto:patrick.emonts@chu.ulg.ac.be) (P. Emonts).

<sup>1</sup> Support Unit in Epidemiology and Biostatistics, University of Liège, Quartier Hôpital, Avenue Hippocrate 13, Bât. B23, 4000 Liège, Belgium.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Public Health, Epidemiology and Health Economics, University of Liège, Quartier Hôpital, Avenue Hippocrate 13, Bât. B23, 4000 Liège, Belgium.

<sup>3</sup> Department and Head of the Public Health Department, Bone and cartilage metabolism Department, CHU Liège, Quai Godefroid Kurth 45, 4000 Liège, Belgium.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Liège, Quartier Hôpital, Avenue Hippocrate 13, Bât. B23, 4000 Liège, Belgium.

The postnatal period appears to be a stressful time in the life of a woman with sudden and intense changes in women roles and responsibilities (Dayan, 2007; Norhayati et al., 2014; Cristescu et al., 2015). The need for information also appears to be well present in the postpartum period (Emmanuel et al., 2001; Carolan, 2007; Malata and Chirwa, 2011). In Belgium, a preliminary study undertaken by our team concentrated on identifying mothers' needs during the year following childbirth reported a huge need for information after pregnancy (*manuscript under review*). This qualitative study also showed that a lot of women used the Internet (e.g. Websites and forums) to try to answer their questions. Nevertheless, mothers denounced the lack of reliability of these sources. Despite this perceived unreliability, women seem to continue to access the Internet and use the information they find online. To the best of our knowledge, there is no study that assesses the Internet as a source of information used by women after childbirth to meet their information needs.

Therefore, the aims of this survey were: (a) to evaluate the need of information after childbirth and what questions do 'new' mothers ask themselves; (b) to assess why and how women use the Internet to meet their need of information after childbirth; (c) to describe how the respondents evaluate the reliability of the information found; (d) to understand how the information found on the Internet affects women's decision-making after childbirth; and (e) to appreciate how health professionals react to the information found by the women.

## Methods

### Participants

We recruited women who had at least one child between 0 and 2 years old from various websites and social networks. There were no exclusion criteria; all women who had at least one child between 0 and 2 years old, who resided in Belgium, who understood French and who were agreed to complete the questionnaire were included in the study.

A Belgian governmental economic organization has evaluated the use of information technology in Belgian households (SPF Economie - Baromètre - Ménages et individus, 2016). In 2015, 75.0% of Belgian people said that they had access to the Internet at home because they wanted to inform themselves. These data allow us to calculate the minimum number of participants needed for this survey:  $n = [QG(1 - \frac{\alpha}{2})^2 \frac{\pi(1-\pi)}{\Delta^2} = \frac{0.75 \times 0.25}{0.05^2} \times 1.96^2 = 288$  (Albert, 2008). In this formula,  $p=0.75$  (proportion of Belgian people who had access to the Internet in 2016) and we fixed  $\alpha=0.05$  and  $\Delta=0.05$ .

The study was approved by the 'Comité d'Ethique Hospitalo-Facultaire Universitaire de Liège', under the number 2013-254.

### Questionnaire and parameters investigated

A literature review demonstrated that none of the published instruments were able to meet the objectives of this research. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed specifically for this study. It was mainly based on the Lagan et al. questionnaire (Lagan et al., 2010) (test-retest correlation = 0.97), which is specific to pregnancy, and on the specific needs of our study. It included mainly structured multiple choice questions.

### Background variables

The first set of structured questions gathered information about various parameters that could influence the usage of the Internet, i.e., age; socioeconomic status (combined level of education, professional status and household income); number of children; history of last pregnancy, childbirth or postnatal period; use of a computer at work; Internet-related skills; and the number and type of health problems (during and after the pregnancy). Participants were then asked whether

they had an Internet connection at home and whether they possessed a computer, a smartphone or a tablet. Some questions also appraised their interests within a tailored platform, on the Internet or on mobile apps, dedicated to their postnatal period, where they could communicate with other patients or with doctors. They were asked if the hospital where they gave birth provided an information tool to them.

### Main outcome measures

Mothers were next asked whether they used the Internet to search for pregnancy or postnatal issues (about the baby or herself); whether they used other sources for searching information, what was their reasoning for this, and what were their subjects of searching; and whether they had one or more favourite websites to search and at what frequency and in what place they would do so. Following a review of the literature and previous studies conducted in our department, a list was built with different possible reasons for searching information from the Internet. These reasons were proposed to the respondents in a structured question and no space was given for additional explanations. They were also asked whether they found the information that they sought and how much time they needed to find it. They were then requested to give a score on a 10-cm scale to assess how they felt about the reliability of the health information found on the Internet.

The questionnaire also enquired how mothers used the information found and whether their daily decision making was influenced by this information. The decision-making process was investigated by the following questions: 'To what extent did the search for information on the Internet, help you make a decision related to your health; help you make a decision related to your child's health; help you make a better decision; help you to have a better control over the decisions affecting your child health; help you to be involved in the decision-making process around your child?' (possible answers were: not at all, a little, quite a bit, a great deal) and 'Did the information that you have found on the Internet influence the way you thought of managing your child (e.g. diet, illness, sleep, games, pacifier, etc.)?' (possible answers were: yes, no, I don't know). Mothers were then asked whether they felt the need to talk about the information found with their friends, relatives or physicians and whether they discussed the information with a doctor, and if so, the doctor reaction was explored.

The questionnaire was first pre-tested on a non-electronic version by 16 mothers and this led to very minor changes. Then, the questionnaire was constructed through a web platform ([www.sondageonline.com](http://www.sondageonline.com)). Complete information about the study was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. The participation in the study was therefore considered as the consent of the respondent. Participation in the survey was anonymous.

### Promotion of the study and enrolment

The study was published on various websites and dedicated Facebook pages. To reach as many women as possible we chose to diversify the websites and Facebook pages from official government ones to more individual ones including Facebook pages from independent midwives and specific mothers-and-babies shops. A list of them can be found in Table 1 with a free translation. The study was also promoted by word of mouth allowing a wider dissemination of the study. The promotion of the study was made between December, 19 2015 and March, 31 2016 and was free.

To prevent multiple enrolments, thanks to the IP address, if a woman would follow the link to the survey several times, she would pick up the survey where she left off last time. In addition, on the information page at the beginning of the questionnaire, women were asked to respond only once to the survey.

### Statistical analysis

A Shapiro-Wilk test verified the normal distribution of all para-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5122385>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5122385>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)