

Finding Credible Cancer Education Resources during the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Janet Lasin, MLS, BS

While most public, hospital and academic libraries are closed to visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a wealth of information available online, especially for cancer patients seeking disease specific information. According to the American Library Association, public libraries are making virtual resources available and considering other ways they can help during this time.

At Rutgers Cancer Institute's Resource and Learning Center (RLC), we too are dedicated to supporting our patients and the public with online resources and reference through our web site: cinj.org/rlc. The RLC's 'recommended website' page, cinj.org/education/recommended-websites, provides links to trustworthy information on 35 general cancer topics and 32 disease specific topics. COVID-19 Information for Cancer Patients also has been added to that page. General health and wellness information, 3D videos of surgical procedures and medical animations also can be found on our website.

The RLC's Facebook page, facebook.com/ResourceLearningCenter, also features key information including event postings, news alerts, and new resource additions to the library. Individuals should follow us to make sure they get the latest updates.

Also, RLC's YouTube channel, youtube.com/user/cinjrlc, contains playlists for a select number of topics. These include but are not limited to chemotherapy, immunotherapy, emotional and mental health, and kids with cancer.

You should always strive to find trustworthy information on the Internet, but this is especially important when looking for health information.

How do you know if a website is a credible source for health information? Here are a few guidelines that you can use to help with your evaluation:

- In general, good sources for health information include sites from the federal government (.gov), educational institutes (.edu), and organizations (.org).
- Look for an "about us" link on the site that provides information on who runs the site. This may also include a mission statement.
- Check who reviews the information that you are reading. Is there a Medical Advisory Board? If you are looking at cancer information, there should be medical professionals on the board that specialize in oncology.
- Is there a date listed as to when the page was last updated? Health information changes rapidly and you want to make sure the information you are reading is current and up-to-date.
- Do you see typographical errors on the page? Are there dead links? Does the page look sloppy? If so, you may want to try another website.
- Is the information that is being claimed too good to be true? If there is any doubt with what you are reading, try to verify the information on another website.
- Be cautious since anyone can put information on the Internet.

The RLC's medical librarian, Janet Lasin, is available to help address your information questions. She can be reached at cinj-rlc@cinj.rutgers.edu.