

This is the second of three issues of Harris Interactive Health Care News dedicated to presenting results of a four-nation study of cyberchondriacs in the U.S.A., France, Germany and Japan.

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4-Country Survey Finds Most Cyberchondriacs Believe Online Health Care Information Is Trustworthy, Easy to Find and Understand

Large numbers in Germany, France, Japan and the U.S.A. report several ways that the Internet has influenced their behavior

Most adults in all four countries who participated in a recent Harris Interactive survey of “cyberchondriacs” (people who use the Internet for health purposes) find online health care information to be trustworthy, of good quality, easy to understand and easy to find. In some cases, these majorities are very large. Fully, 93% of cyberchondriacs in the United States (U.S.A.) and France find online health information to be trustworthy. Large majorities of American cyberchondriacs think it is easy to understand (85%) and is of good quality (82%). The French and Germans also give Internet-based health information very positive marks. Japanese cyberchondriacs are a little more skeptical, but fully, 56% of them find it easy to understand, 59% believe it is of good quality, and 80% think it is trustworthy.

TABLE 1

Consumer Evaluation of Online Health Care Information

“Percent who agree that health care information on the Internet is...”

Base: All cyberchondriacs

	Easy to Find ¹ %	Easy to Understand ¹ %	Good Quality ² %	Trustworthy ³ %
U.S.A.	72	85	82	93
France	57	78	60	93
Germany	60	72	70	71
Japan	62	56	59	80

1 Summary of Very Easy and Somewhat Easy

2 Summary of Excellent, Very Good and Good

3 Summary of A Great Deal and Somewhat

Source: Global Cyberchondriac Study, Harris Interactive, January 2002

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General Impact of the Internet on Patients

Approximately half of all cyberchondriacs in France (49%) and Germany (50%) believe that the Internet has had a major impact in their understanding of their health problems. Approximately a third of those in the U.S.A. (34%) and Japan (30%) believe this.

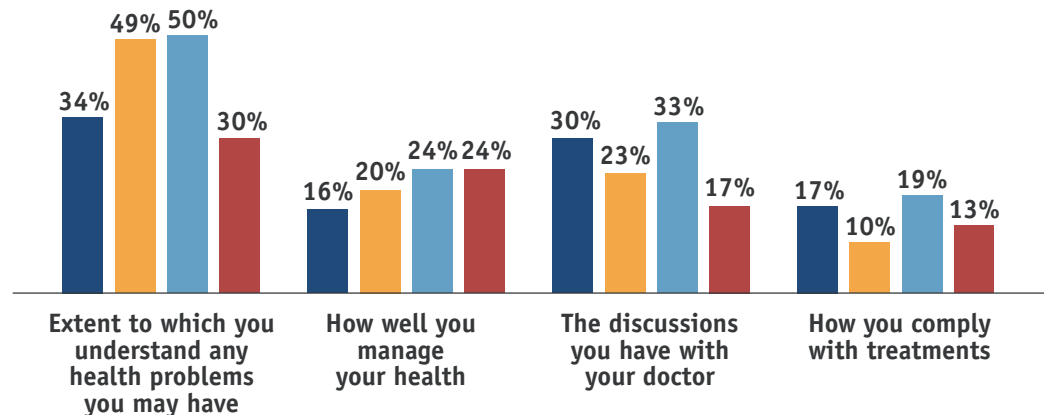
Substantial minorities report that online health information has had a **major impact** on:

- **Discussions they have with their doctors** (from 33% in Germany to 17% in Japan);
- **How well they manage their health** (from 24% in Germany and Japan to 16% in the U.S.A.); and,
- **How they comply with their treatments** (from 19% in Germany to 13% in Japan).

TABLE 2

Percent Believing Health-Related Information From the Internet Had a “Major Impact” on...

■ U.S.A. ■ France ■ Germany ■ Japan



Source: Harris Interactive, January 2002

American cyberchondriacs seem to be more influenced than those in the other three countries by things they see on the Internet.

Impact of the Internet on Patient Behavior

Americans are the most likely to have discussed information from the Internet with their doctors (38%), to have taken over-the-counter medication (23%), to have asked a doctor for a specific prescription drug (14%), to have made a doctor’s appointment (14%) or to have started an alternative treatment (9%) – as a direct result of something they saw on the Internet.

TABLE 3

Percent of All Adults Who Have Done Any of the Following as a Direct Result of Something They Saw on the Internet

	U.S.A. %	France %	Germany %	Japan %
Discussed information with doctor	38	13	19	9
Took over-the-counter medication	23	7	12	13
Asked doctor for prescription medication	14	3	8	3
Made appointment to see doctor	14	5	6	6
Started alternative treatment	9	2	8	7

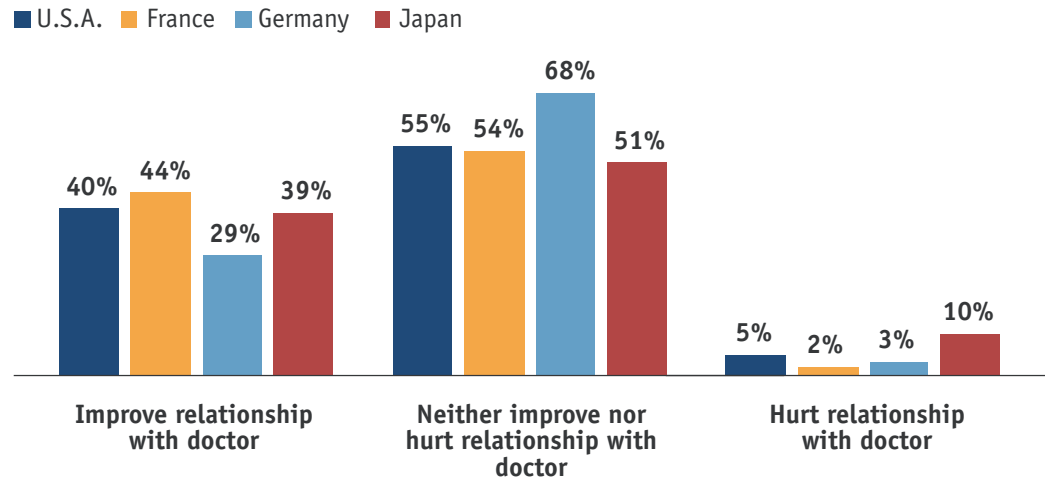
Source: Harris Interactive, January 2002

Likely Future Impact on Doctor-Patient Relationships

There are those who worry that as the public increasingly uses and gets more information from the Internet, the doctor-patient relationship will erode. While this is possible, very few people – in all four countries – expect this to happen. Only in Japan (10%) is this anticipated by more than one cyberchondriac in twenty.

Most people, between 51% in Japan and 68% in Germany, think the Internet will not change their relationships with their doctors. Large minorities, from 29% in Germany to 44% in France *think their use of the Internet will actually improve their relationships*. If they are right, the Internet will bring more patients and doctors closer together than will drive them apart.

TABLE 4
Percent Who Agree the Internet Will...



Source: Harris Interactive, January 2002

Is “Cyberchondriacs” a Pejorative?

Since we first began using the word “cyberchondriacs,” we have been asked if it is a pejorative, which implies that they are obsessive or unusual. It is not.

The word “chondria,” literally meaning stomach, was used in classical Greek to mean “concern about health.” The English word hypochondria means excessive (hypo) concern about health.

Cyberchondria means, therefore, “online concern about health” and implies no criticism.

We plan to release more information from this four-nation study in other issues of *Health Care News*. It is mainly based on research conducted online in January 2002 with 309 cyberchondriacs in the United States, 327 in France, 407 in Germany and 275 in Japan.

About Harris InteractiveSM

Harris Interactive (www.harrisinteractive.com) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm best known for *The Harris Poll*[®] and its pioneering use of the Internet to conduct scientifically accurate market research. We combine the power of unique methodologies and technology with international expertise in predictive, custom and strategic research. Headquartered in Rochester, NY, with offices across the United States, in the United Kingdom, Japan and a global network of local market and opinion research firms, the Company conducts international research with fluency in multiple languages. EOE M/F/D/V

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