Search engines of little use for people seeking information on implants online

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, SPAIN: According to reports, an increasing number of people tend to look for health-related information on the Internet. In the field of dentistry, dental implants currently rank among the top three most searched topics after amalgam and aesthetic treatment. The findings of a Spanish study suggest that results for this search term provided by common search engines do not lead to either easily comprehensible or useful information for users.

From the 100 highest-ranked results listed for the search term “dental implants” by the two most popular search engines, Google Search and Yahoo! Search, in autumn 2013, the researchers from the University of Santiago de Compostela found that the overall majority scored low in accessibility and usability. The information provided on the remaining websites, which were evaluated by the group over the course of the study, was also seriously lacking in terms of both of these criteria. The results on the Yahoo search engine scored slightly higher in terms of relevance and usability in comparison with Google. No significant difference could be detected between the two search engines’ results in terms of accessibility however.

The poor outcome in terms of quality in even the highest-ranked results could be a reason that patients considering dental implants are misinformed about the device or have overly high expectations for the treatment, the researchers suggested. “E-health information on dental implants in the English language is difficult to read for the average patient and poor in terms of quality,” they said in the report. “Therefore, it is necessary to generate websites that provide reliable, high-quality information about dental implants, with content that is both independent from commercial interest and easy to understand by the average patient.”

According to a quick web search by Dental Tribune, Yahoo listed slightly over 1.7 million results for “dental implants” in early September, while Google listed around twice that number. With approximately one billion users a month, the market leader remains the most popular English-speaking search engine worldwide, followed by Yahoo, which is estimated to have 300 million users.

Overall, the study only included 32 websites, of which the majority were affiliated to non-profit organisations, or medical or dental institutions. Only five of these websites were listed among the results on both search engines. Websites hosted by companies, as well as forums or discussion groups, were not included, according to the researchers.

The study, which was recently published in the Clinical Oral Implants Research journal, was conducted by the OMEQUI research group at the University of Santiago de Compostela’s School of Medicine and Dentistry.
Tooth loss expected to decline significantly in the US

CHAPEL HILL, USA: The number of edentulous people will decline significantly, a study has found. Researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill followed edentulism over the last hundred years and predict that the number of people with tooth loss will be 50 per cent lower in 2050 than it was in 2010.

The researchers investigated population trends in edentulism among US adults at least 15 years of age by creating time-series data from five national cross-sectional health surveys: 1957 to 1958 (100,000 adults), 1971 to 1975 (14,655 adults), 1988 to 1998 (18,011 adults), 1999 to 2002 (12,536 adults) and 2009 to 2012 (10,522 adults). Birth cohort analysis was used to isolate age and cohort effects. Geographic and socio-demographic variation in prevalence were investigated using a sixth US survey of 432,519 adults conducted in 2010. Prevalence through 2050 was projected using age cohort regression models with simulation of prediction intervals.

Across the five-decade observation period, edentulism prevalence declined from 18.9 per cent in 1957 to 1958 to 4.9 per cent in 2009 to 2012. The single most influential determinant of the decline was the passing of generations born before the 1940s, whose rate of edentulism incidence (5 to 6 per cent per decade of age) far exceeded that of later cohorts (1 to 3 per cent per decade of age). High-income households experienced a greater relative decline, but a smaller absolute decline, than did low-income households.

By 2010, edentulism was a rare condition in high-income households and had contracted geographically to states with disproportionately high poverty. With the passing of generations born in the mid-20th century, the rate of decline in edentulism is projected to slow, reaching 2.6 per cent (95 per cent prediction limits: 2.1 per cent, 3.1 per cent) by 2050. The continuing decline will be offset only partially by population growth and population aging, such that the predicted number of edentulous people in 2050 (8.6 million; 95 per cent prediction limits: 6.8 million, 10.3 million) will be 30 per cent lower than the 12.2 million edentulous people in 2010.

“While it’s encouraging to know that this study by Dr Gary Slade illustrates a steep decline in US edentulism over the past five decades, these health gains in absolute terms have not been distributed equally,” said American Association for Dental Research President Dr Timothy DeRouen. “Additional public health measures must be taken to reduce tooth loss in low-income populations.”

The paper, titled “Projections of U.S. Edentulism Prevalence Following Five Decades of Decline,” was published online on August 21 in the Journal of Dental Research ahead of print. The journal is a publication of the International Association for Dental Research and the American Association for Dental Research, a division of the IADR. The IADR is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing research and increasing knowledge for the improvement of oral health, among other objectives.