

Orthopaedic Connection

Cyberchondria

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Now that you are all fully informed about the world of Spinal Stenosis I want to go in a different direction.

Hmm. Where do I begin? Having an office teaching website for patients and families I think gives me a better perspective about this than other people in practice who don't educate people on their own teaching website.

It has been written that access to dire medical diagnoses spreads cyberchondria like a virus. The computer and its access to almost everyone, the information superhighway as the Internet is termed, is truly a modern miracle. Who could have ever imagined all we can learn from it?

In the case of medical information, diagnoses and conditions, most people who are not physicians are not in a position to understand and interpret the information correctly. This is true of patients and also nurses and other health care person.

Cyberchondria is a rapidly spreading condition that affects millions. It is getting worse by the day. I can't speak for other countries, but here in America people are routinely typing their symptoms, aches and pains into Google or any other search engine.

Out comes a host of medical conditions. Many of them are esoteric, dire and unintelligible to the average person. What do they do then? They ask someone else in their family or a friend to help interpret and they don't know anything either; or worse they know a little, but sometimes that is worse than knowing nothing.

Patients become frightened that they have something awful. For some reason they focus on the scary things. It's the worst case scenario syndrome.

I remember the "old days" when I wished patients could be more informed about their health. My how times change - many patients are taking it way too far and overdosing on health websites.

A headache usually is just that. It could be a brain tumor, but chances of that are extremely low (one in ten thousand).

Internet self diagnosis is common in all age groups, but as people get to 40 plus they begin to look at things differently. They see people their age getting cancer and having heart attacks. As you become aware of your mortality, nothing seems minor anymore.

The message. Look something up only if you know what you have. Perhaps you want to get some additional information about your torn rotator cuff, to use an example of a common condition I treat. But even then it is best to know the source of the information.

As far as musculoskeletal conditions are concerned www.orthopodsurgeon.com which also can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection has all the information you need.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush