

## The Doctor as the Second Opinion and the Internet as the First

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**Abstract.** People who use the Internet for health information often obtain their first opinion that way, and then, if they go to a doctor, the doctor's advice is relegated to the second opinion. Using the Internet, or Dr. Google, as a first opinion can be problematic due to misinformation, misinterpretation of valid information, and the fears that can arise due to lack of medical knowledge, inexperience, and limited perspectives. When patients do visit their doctor for a second opinion, some do not disclose the fact they already received their first opinion and often their doctors do not ask. The result is that patients may suffer needlessly if their fears,

concerns, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations are not addressed by the healthcare providers with the expertise and skills to assist them. A pernicious disconnect exists between many patients who use the Internet for health information and the medical professionals who care for them. The medical profession can alleviate this disconnect by taking the lead in establishing guidelines for systematically talking to patients about, and guiding, their Internet research. Technology professionals and researchers can collaborate with the medical community to ensure that technological innovations help patients achieve better health.