

Special Issue

Digital Trust Formation in Relation to Health Information

Message from the Guest Editors

Health information is one of the most frequent subjects of online information seeking, even more so after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which began in December 2019. Searching for health information online is easy and convenient, but is it trustworthy? The evaluation tools available to assess this key aspect of health-related information are varied and have been further developed in the last 10 years or so. However, the amount of digital information is multiplying at a rate faster than ever before and, while on the one hand it offers opportunities for health education, on the other, a matching proliferation of misinformation can lead to potentially devastating consequences for users. It is crucial to understand how people discriminate among the information searched and retrieved and how they determine which results are trustworthy and which are to be discarded. Trust formation in health information seeking has been the focus of a considerable body of research over the years, but relatively few studies have considered how trust is affected at times of health crisis such as the one we are navigating at present.

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Addressing the environmental and public health challenges requires engagement and collaboration among clinicians and public health researchers. Scientific discoveries and advances in this research field play a critical role in providing a rational basis for informed decision-making toward control and prevention of human diseases, especially the illnesses that are induced from environmental exposure to health hazards.

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