



In the health domain, the Internet has greatly aided in empowering citizens by making a wealth of knowledge available in all areas of health and healthcare.

Considering the speed and lack of control of the Internet growth, the biggest concern nowadays is not about finding information, but about whether the information provided is reliable or not.

This is particularly important in a delicate domain such as health. Citizens are exposed to a variety of messages, many of which can be misleading or erroneous.

The truth is: finding reliable health information can be difficult and time-consuming.

The **Health On the Net Foundation (HON www.HealthOnNet.org)** has been working, since its creation in 1996, to promote the effective and reliable use of the new technologies in healthcare.

HON is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Switzerland, and has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

HON's two main goals are:

### 1. Improving the quality of e-health information



The **HONcode** is the oldest and most internationally used Code of Ethics - now a de facto standard - for health-related websites. It

is based on **eight requirements** that concern the following aspects:

- Authorship
- Complementarity
- Privacy
- Attribution
- Justifiability and completeness
- Transparency
- Funding
- Advertising policy

Each request of certification is examined by a member of the HONcode Review Committee, which includes medical professionals. The certification is free of charge. Certified websites are granted a HONcode quality mark, helping citizens identify reliable websites, and undergo a systematic annual review, required for the renewal of the



HONcode certificate.  
HONcode highlights

- HON implemented the 2001 eEurope Quality Criteria for Health Web Sites, based on the HONcode principles.
- As of today, there are more than 7,200 HONcode certified websites across 102 countries, representing over 10 million web pages.
- 4,400 certified websites in 24 European countries.

• HON, the official certifying body for health websites in France.

Since 2007, HON has been accredited by the French High Health Authority as the official certifying body for French health websites. In France alone, there are already more than 1,300 certified websites.

• In May 2004, HON won the "eEurope Award for eHealth," chosen from over 100 participants.

### 2. Improving the access to quality e-health information

HON is also engaged in the research and development of strategies aimed at improving the access to quality health information.

• **HON search engines** - through its website, HON offers several specialized medical search engines to facilitate search and provide trustworthy results.

• **WRAPIN (Worldwide online Reliable Advice to Patients and Individuals)** is a new search engine concept that allows the user to determine the quality of health-related documents or web pages.

• **HONCode Toolbar**, once installed in a browser, checks the HONcode certification status of any visited website. The search box refines search results by searching only on HONcode certified websites.

• **PIPS (Personalised Information Platform for life and health Services)**, a project in the 6th Framework Program of the European Union for the remote monitoring of patients' health.