



Swiss foundation certifies growing number of health and medical websites

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More than 6,800 health and medical websites are now certified by Switzerland's Health On the Net Foundation, its executive director Celia Boyersays. This includes websites from 118 countries, with Spain and French- and English-speaking Africa most recently joining the network, she adds.

The not-for-profit organisation gives advice on providing reliable and useful medical and health information via the internet. It also offers guidance on how web designers can incorporate the foundation's code of conduct (HONcode) into their websites. "It is important to stress that HON not only evaluates a site but also advises the webmaster on what should be amended and how", comments Mrs Boyer.

Endorsed sites can display the HONcode logo, which states the date of certification. Evaluation is free and is reassessed each year. Internet users are also able to search for "trustworthy" health information using HON's search engines.

In 2007 the French government stipulated that all health and medical websites should be certified by HON. The foundation, which was set up in 1995, is in the process of establishing representations in Canada and Italy to extend its global reach.

HON is also developing "technologies and services of tomorrow", says Mrs Boyer. The foundation is currently assessing readability, health literacy and accessibility issues.



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