



## MASTER patient advice sheet

### **Using the Internet for researching treatment options for clinical trials**

The internet can be a very informative and helpful source of information. A quick search using Google or another search engine will return a wealth of information from multiple different sources from all over the world. This information may be well-researched and from reputable sources. However, there are some important points to keep in mind when you are deciding on your treatment options.

#### **What is the source?**

It is important to consider who is supplying the information as there may be a conflict of interest behind the way information is presented. For instance,

- A company may have a vested interest in selling their product, such as a drug company or health supplier.
- Private hospitals may also present information in a pro-treatment way, as they have a financial incentive to you having your medical treatment in their clinic.
- Articles about 'new' treatments from the media may be sensationalised, inaccurate or biased in their presentation of the facts.

Even articles that appear to be from trusted sources and are well-researched may often be misleading.

- The information is no longer up-to-date.
- There may be limited or no evidence for the facts and figures that are presented.
- There may be conflicting reports from multiple studies.

#### **Which sources can I trust?**

The information provided by the trial health professionals, NHS medical resources and organisations such as NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) has been based on up-to-date scientific evidence and has been carefully worded to be free of bias. If you are still unsure about your source of information then ask your doctor and they will be able to help you reach an informed decision.