Can Technology Reduce Hospital and Doctor Wait Times?

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One quarter (28%) of online Canadians agree that they would prefer to have their first visit with their doctor via email, text messaging or webcam

Over one-quarter (28%) of online Canadians agree that they would prefer to have their first visit with their doctor via email, text messaging or webcam according to a recent Ipsos Interactive Reid report.

Eight percent strongly agree that they would prefer to use one of these communications mediums, while 20% somewhat agree.

Females (33%) are significantly more likely to agree that they would like to have their first visit with their doctor via email, text message or webcam. Furthermore, there are notable differences by age group, with those 55 or over being significantly less likely (23%) to agree with the statement.

In contrast, 40% of respondents aged 18-34 agreed that they would be willing to have an initial meeting with their doctor via email, text message or webcam. Agreement also increases with the respondentsâ€™ level of education.

Study author Mark Laver noted that â€˜one of the key findings here is that it shows how comfortable many Canadians are with using the Internet and communicating online.

There isnâ€™t much that is more personal that oneâ€™s own health. The fact that some are receptive to communicating online with their doctor shows how far the Internet and online communication has come.â€™

Online Canadians appear to be slightly less likely to want to have an initial visit with a random doctor via text message or webcam. One-fifth (22%) of online Canadians would prefer to have their first visit with â€˜a doctorâ€™ versus 28% for their doctor specifically.

Six percent (6%) strongly agree that they would prefer to use one of these communications mediums, while 16% somewhat agree.

Again, older online Canadians are less likely to agree (16%) that they would be willing to have their initial consultation via email text message or webcam with â€˜a doctorâ€™.

One-third (33%) of respondents aged 18-34 agreed that they would prefer their initial meeting to be via email, text message or webcam.

Study author Mark Laver noted that â€˜what this data may ultimately reveal is that some members of the general public are open to the idea of an initial consultation with any doctor via online methods.

This could not only reduce wait times at health care facilities, but also reduce operating expenses for provincial health agencies.

Many businesses have already determined that using online chat and email can be a method to service more people in the same amount of time, thus reducing operating expenses.â€™

This release is based on the findings of an Ipsos Reid syndicated study, the Inter@ctive Reid Report, fielded in Q4, 2009. This online survey of 879 Canadian adults was conducted via the Ipsos Online Panel.

The results are based on a sample where quota sampling and weighting are employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to Census data.

Quota samples with weighting from the Ipsos online panel provide results that are intended to approximate a probability sample. An unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.31 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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