Overview: This lesson is intended to help students learn about better ways to conduct research on the internet. Finding information online is an essential skill in many domains, but especially related to health because there is a significant amount of misinformation about health propagating on the internet. Acquiring poor information about health conditions can have serious consequences.

Students will learn how to find resources, evaluate their usefulness, and evaluate their reliability. The lesson begins with a brief lecture using the provided powerpoint, to discuss the computational aspects of conducting searches or queries. After the lecture, students complete a worksheet that has them working hands on to conduct research into different health issues.

Time: The lecture is approximately 30 minutes. The worksheet takes students between 50 - 75 minutes to complete. Students completing sooner typically have not done thorough research.

Lesson Plan: See the attached powerpoint for delivering the lecture. After delivering the lecture, the students should each get access to a computer and complete the worksheet. It is very important for the teacher(s) to circulate around the classroom and provide feedback about the kinds of sources and information the students are finding. Some students will rely on wikipedia, wikianswers and health blogs for their information, even though the lecture and criteria for evaluating the sources clearly indicate these are not good sources. Providing feedback while they are searching will help them better understand the quality of resources they are expected to find.

We also recommend pushing students towards academic resources such as peer reviewed journals available through PubMed Central or the school’s library. Learning how to find and extract information from academic resources is an important skill.

Outcomes: Students will become more proficient researchers. Students will know how to differentiate a good source for health information from a poor source. Students will know how to locate an academic resource for information and how to extract the relevant information from that article. Students will practice synthesizing information from multiple sources into a cohesive answer and discussion.