Surgeons still the preferred source of information for cancer sufferers

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Despite the ease of the internet and the changing technological landscape, health professionals are still the number one source of information for sufferers of colorectal cancer, according to Adelaide surgical registrar, Dr Reizal Mohd Rosli.

Dr Mohd Rosli will present his findings of a recently conducted study of 99 patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Annual Scientific Conference this week in Perth.

Dr Mohd Rosli, from Adelaide’s Flinders Medical Centre, said the objective of his research was to ascertain the manner in which patients accessed information about their condition, and how they rated their satisfaction on the information made available from different sources.

“Although it is extremely easy nowadays for patients to do an online search on colorectal cancer, surgeons were listed as patients’ first preference when it came to getting information, according to our survey.

“This implies that surgeons or any other healthcare providers still play a vital role in ensuring patients are well informed,” Dr Mohd Rosli said.

However, Dr Mohd Rosli stressed the importance of doctors understanding the multiple information gathering techniques of their patients, and to ensure that they received the highest quality information available regardless of their choice of medium.

“Doctors should help guide their patients towards useful and reliable websites, to avoid misinformation or information overload from the Internet.”

According to the results, about half of patients with Internet access went online to get more information about their condition, with age not appearing to be a deterrent.

“The age of patients who used the Internet for information on colorectal cancer ranged from 32 to 85 years old. This wide age range suggests that age is not a factor when it comes to using modern technology.”

“Interestingly, one patient even used a smartphone application to understand the cancer better, and he was 80 years old,” Dr Mohd Rosli said.

Over a thousand surgeons from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons as well as international surgeons from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh are gathering at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre this week for a series of workshops, discussions, Plenaries and masterclasses across a broad range of surgical issues.

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The RACS 2015 conference will also pay tribute to the centenary of Gallipolli, by analysing ethics and developments in surgery over the past 100 years, in war and peace time, as well as exploring what the future may hold in surgical progress.