



# How Hispanics Use The Internet For Health

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*A DrTango White Paper by:*

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## A Literature Review and Data Analysis

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## Executive Summary

In the decade from 1990 to 2000, the U.S. Hispanic population increased by more than 50%, from approximately 22 million to 35 million. Since many of these Hispanics have limited proficiency in English, or prefer to receive information in Spanish, government agencies and healthcare providers are seeking ways to provide health information that is linguistically and culturally appropriate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is seeking to better define the potential of the Internet to expand the provision of health information to Hispanic consumers, particularly those who prefer to receive health information in Spanish.

Towards this objective, the CDC has contracted DrTango, Inc., a private company that specializes in providing Internet-based health information for Hispanics to:

1. Provide a focused literature review in regard to the use of the Internet by Spanish speaking Hispanics, and
2. Analyze and summarize information from DrTango's databases that can further describe how Spanish-speaking U.S. Hispanics use the Internet to search for and use health information

DrTango has four unique databases reflecting Internet usage by Spanish-speaking Hispanics. Two of these databases are derived from the Spanish-version the online *Health Illustrated Encyclopedia* developed by A.D.A.M Inc. and translated into Spanish by DrTango. A third database is derived from visits to DrTango's online, Spanish language diet and physical activity promotion program called MiDiet<sup>TM</sup>, located on the Univision.com website. These databases are comprised of information from a large and growing number of Spanish-speaking consumers. For example, during the six week period that we gathered data about visits to the encyclopedia on Univision.com website, more than 10,000 users utilized the encyclopedia website. The fourth database contains information from over 8,000 visits to the encyclopedia by Spanish-speaking clients of a major healthcare provider organization, Texas-based HAMPTON Health. For the current report, we have also analyzed data on more than 50,000 users of the MiDiet<sup>TM</sup> program that have provided personal data and completed a free evaluation of dietary and physical activity patterns and body weight status.

## Key Findings

Key findings from the focused literature review and analysis of DrTango's databases include the following:

- Various studies indicate that between 32% and 50% of Hispanics are using the Internet, and that this prevalence is increasing
- The literature review indicates that more women than men (59% vs 42%) use the Internet for health information, and that 46% of users are under age 30

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- The DrTango databases indicate that approximately 70% of those using the online Spanish-language *Health Illustrated Encyclopedia* are women; 31% are under age 30 and an additional 51% are between the ages of 30 and 45 years

For Spanish-speaking visitors that registered for unlimited access to the online *Health Illustrated Encyclopedia* within Univision.com website:

- Over 70% searched the Internet for health information on at least a weekly basis
- Over 60% have a high school education *or less*
- Approximately 80% preferred accessing Internet-based health information in Spanish rather than English
- A study in the literature review found that the *amount of time* that Hispanics spend on Spanish-language websites has increased significantly, from 30% in 2000 to 55% in 2002
- Based on the frequency of searches in the *Health Illustrated Encyclopedia*, users from both the Univision.com website and the healthcare website most frequently searched for information on gastrointestinal, ear/nose/throat and dental topics
- Users on the Univision.com website searched most frequently for information dealing with skin problems, female genito-urinary problems and musculo-skeletal complaints. Users from the healthcare site were somewhat more likely to search for articles dealing with chronic disease issues including cardiovascular and pulmonary conditions
- Reports in the literature review indicate that Spanish-speaking consumers often find incomplete answers to their questions on the Internet, and that health information on Spanish-language websites is sparse and consistently less accurate

The *Health Illustrated Encyclopedia* developed by ADAM, Inc and translated and culturally adapted by DrTango, Inc was well regarded:

- 70 percent of encyclopedia users reported finding the information they were looking for and 80 percent found the information “very useful”, indicating that at least this source of online health information appeared to satisfy the needs of the great majority of users
- In response to the question “In general, how satisfactory is the health information you find on the Internet, 67% of respondents that completed DrTango’s online evaluation indicated that the information was “very satisfactory” and another 23% found the information “somewhat satisfactory”.

In summary, through literature review and analysis of our proprietary datasets, we found that a large number of Spanish-speaking Hispanics are online and actively seeking health information. Online Hispanics are *not* highly educated, with over 60% having a high school education or less and they are spending over half their online time on Spanish language websites. We believe these trends will continue as more, high quality health information becomes available online in Spanish. Hispanics in our survey reported that they were pleased and highly satisfied with the option of accessing up-to-date, high quality health information online.

In conclusion, this report has added to our knowledge of how Spanish-speaking U.S. Hispanics use the Internet to find health information. There is, however, a great deal more for us to learn. Through DrTango's expanding network of hospitals and media partners, DrTango is continuing to gather data on Hispanics in hopes of finding patterns in how they access health information online.

Utilizing this data will enable us to track trends and begin to evaluate the influence of online health information on changes in behavior and, ultimately, on improvement in health outcomes.



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