



WOMEN'S CANCER INFORMATION PROJECT

The European Institute of Women's Health in conjunction with the Connect.ie have updated the cancer information site for women. The information which is also available in French and Italian will be updated shortly.

Background

This project was first launched by Mr. Kamphausen of DG V "Europe Against Cancer" at the European Commission Offices in Molesworth St., Dublin, in 1996. Initially the cancer information was made available on a set of computer diskettes, containing its own browser. This followed on research completed by the project that showed women's use of the media to gather information about health issues and their lack of access to good technology. (2% of women in 1996 with access to computers had some limited form of access to the web and most did not have equipment with CD roms. To overcome the problems discovered in the research and to encourage women to use the new technologies, a computer disc set was developed. The computer disc was distributed to different women's groups, clubs and organisations. Having the pack on disc enabled these groups access, view and print out high quality information at a low cost. The pack came with a built in browser.

How the pack was used

Women's groups holding a health week utilised the pack or sections from it with print outs for demonstration and further distribution. Some 600 events occurred from this initiative. Companies would provide this information pack through their Intranet – especially if there may not be direct Internet access. In 1998, the pack was developed for presentation on the Internet. The information was made available on the Web, so women in the workplace, in their communities or at home, would be able to avail of this information.. In the years since the pack has been on the Web it has exceeded 15,400,000 accesses.

Methodology

The partners gathered existing cancer information in all formats from all

EU Countries. The purpose of collating this information was to discover the level and extent of materials already available. This allowed the partners with high levels of user input, to determine the format and content that the cancer information pack should take. Groups of women were selected to monitor the information content and presentation. One group of women came from a local community group in central Dublin, including some who had had cancer, and the other from companies, representing women in the workforce. The women, previously described, became the editorial board for the project information and presentation. The consultation process ensured that the final product was user friendly and relevant to the needs of the women who required this.

A graphic artist produced visuals to accompany the text. Following consultation, it was discovered that illustrations were preferred to photographs as the latter could be either explicit or off putting to some women.

To further determine the type of information and presentation required by women, over 600 women's groups were surveyed. The survey examined levels of health information available to local women's groups, their needs with regard to health information and also established the level of technology available to the groups.

A separate questionnaire was designed for general practitioners and was distributed to over 2,000 doctors and oncological nurses. After each group had provided their inputs to the process, the information was sent to oncologists for final checking of the information for medical accuracy.