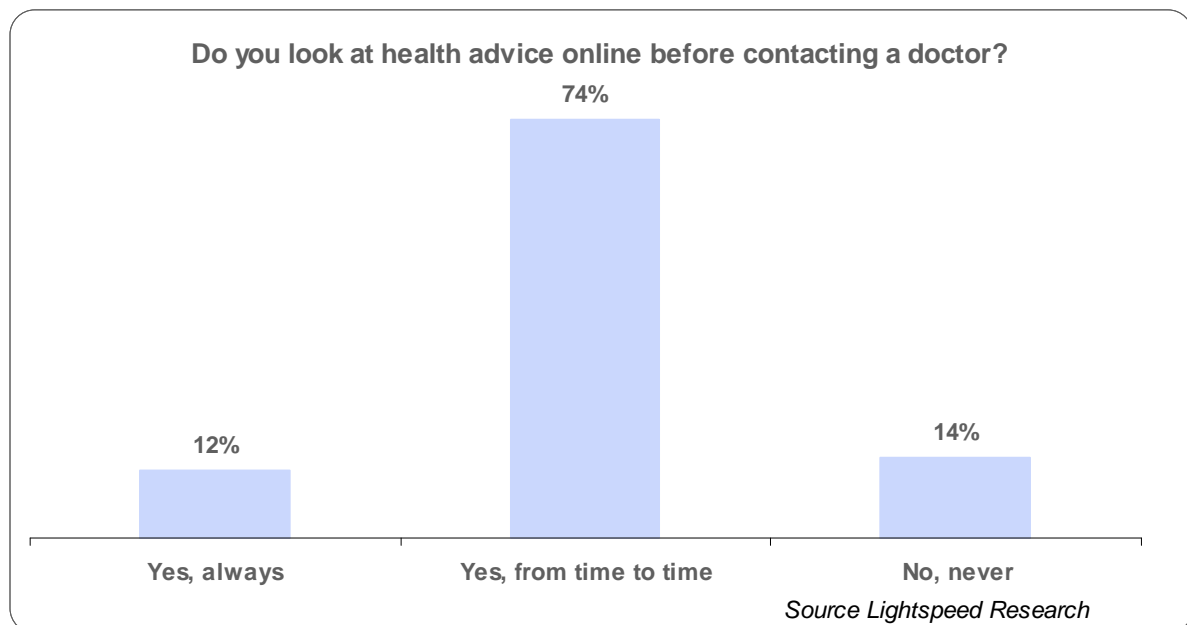


The doctor will email you now

Survey reveals that patients are eager for new ways to contact their GPs including text, email, surgery websites and even online chat

LONDON, UK (13th October 2009) A study released today by Lightspeed Research (www.lightspeedresearch.com), a leading online market research company, reveals that patients in the UK are ready to welcome the “virtual doctor” into their busy lives. With nearly nine out of 10 (86%) consumers sometimes looking for advice online prior to even contacting a doctor, the research indicates that advances in technology are causing a dramatic shift in the way consumers would like to consult their family doctors. According to the survey, and if GPs heed patient demands, email is set to play a big part in the way doctors and patients interact in the future.

Chart 1



Despite moves to make healthcare more accessible, only 14% of respondents said their GPs are contactable by email, 16% via their website and just 4% via SMS. However patients are keen to interact with GPs outside the traditional setting of the surgery. 68% would like to be able to book appointments via their GP's website, over half (51%) would like to be able to do so by email and one in five would like to make an appointment with their doctor by SMS.

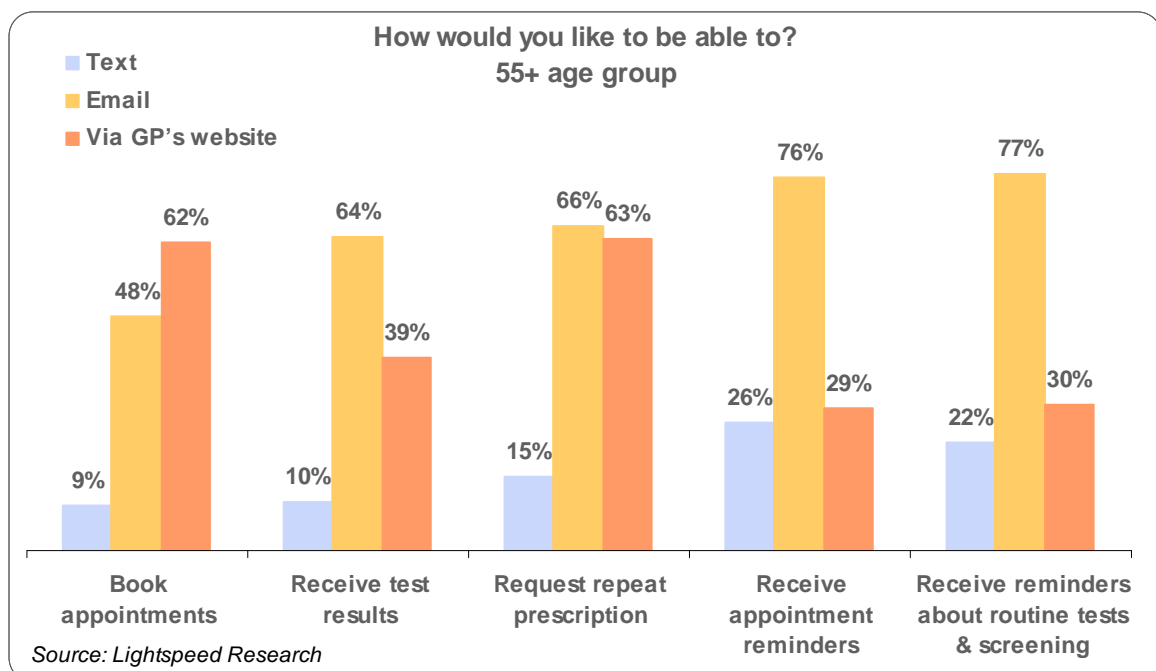
The survey shows that patients would also like to use electronic channels to communicate with their doctors about a range of routine issues. At least seven out of 10 consumers would like to use email to request a repeat prescription and to receive reminders about appointments and routine tests and screening. 67% would also like to receive test results via email. Although email was more popular than text for each of these activities, 52% said they would like to receive appointment reminders and 43% would like to be sent routine tests and screening reminders by text message.

Although seven out of 10 respondents were keen to be able to have a telephone consultation with their doctor, the majority of them (59%) would only like to use the telephone to discuss straightforward conditions. Attitudes towards using email or a GP's website to receive a diagnosis or prescription by email were similar – 64% would like to have this facility, but most of this group would only use it for a simple condition. Online chats with GPs were far less popular, but over a third (37%) would still like to use their computers for a consultation about a straightforward condition.

Patients aren't that patient!

The main drivers for seeking advice via email or through an online chat were speed and convenience – 65% cited the fact that they would spend less time waiting for an appointment as being an advantage and 62% said that a benefit of virtual appointments was that it would save them time both in travelling to the surgery and in getting a quicker appointment.

Chart 2



All age groups responded positively to using technology to communicate with their GP. For instance, as the chart above shows, not only is receiving reminders for routine tests and appointments popular with the over 55 age group, but 57% are also willing to have email consultations and 48% live online chats. Whilst those communications are most likely to be for simple complaints, the impact this could have by offering patients convenience and choice and saving busy GPs time to see serious cases face-to-face could be significant.

David Day, Global CEO of Lightspeed Research said, “These results make it clear that patients want to move beyond the doctor’s surgery and embrace new technology as a means to communicate and interact with their GP. There’s a great opportunity here for GPs to make themselves accessible to patients in a variety of ways and improve efficiency by conducting some consultations by phone and email. More research is needed in this area to understand what patients want and how GPs can meet that demand.

While the virtual doctor will never replace the face-to-face consultation, there are obvious benefits to patients and the health service alike in broadening access to GPs and offering new channels to communicate with each other.”

- Ends –

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About Lightspeed Research

Through proprietary global panels and research products and services, Lightspeed Research delivers valuable research to help businesses make informed decisions. From recruitment, to activity level, to ongoing profiling, Lightspeed Research’s panels are actively managed to provide engaged survey respondents and support studies that range in scope and complexity across industry sectors. Deeply profiled specialty panels including automotive, B2B, beverage, family and household, finance, health and wellness, media consumption, mobile phone, beauty and personal care, sports and hobbies, and travel and leisure, provide quick access to target audiences. As a leader in quality, Lightspeed

Research has implemented extensive measures to prevent fraudulent panel registrations and poor survey data.