This is a Brief Online Learning Tutorial (or BOLT) brought to you by the LISTEN project, a HRSA-funded project focused on improving the information literacy competencies of nursing students and professional nurses.
This BOLT is designed to help nurses know where to find trusted health information quickly and efficiently in the clinical setting. One of the challenges nurses face today, is that with so much health information online, it can be time consuming trying to locate quality patient education materials. Knowing where to go for information makes the best use of valuable time.
Where is a good place to start an online search for patient education materials? Point your mouse to www.medlineplus.gov.
MedlinePlus brings together authoritative information from the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other government agencies and health-related organizations.

You can search the site by entering a term in the search box. Or you can browse the Health Topics. MedlinePlus also includes drug information, a dictionary, an illustrated encyclopedia and directories to look for doctors and hospitals. Also available through MedlinePlus is Flu.gov, a resource that provides comprehensive government-wide information on pandemic influenza and avian influenza. MedlinePlus resources are also available in Spanish.
MedlinePlus’ Interactive Tutorials have more than 165 topics. The tutorials use animated graphics to explain a procedure or condition in easy-to-read language that can be printed off and handed to your patient. The tutorials are also narrated so they can be watched online while listening to the narration.

Surgery Videos on MedlinePlus provide links to pre-recorded webcasts of surgical procedures, helping provide information for patients about to undergo specific procedures. Additional resources via MedlinePlus include links to other NIH resources such as Clinical Trials and Senior Health topics.
Search options within MedlinePlus allow you to look for information according to broad body systems, by clicking on the corresponding link.
MedlinePlus allows you to search diseases or health topics in a quick browsing manner to see what information is available. This screenshot provides an example of what is available through MedlinePlus for the disease topic of “depression”. Information includes a basic overview of the condition, research information on the topic, tutorials on the topic, treatment and disease management, etc. MedlinePlus also provides trusted and authoritative information from other government agencies or health related organizations.
Prescription and over-the-counter medication information available on MedlinePlus is from AHFS® Consumer Medication Information, a product of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP). Notice the questions in the box at the bottom of the slide. By clicking on questions, answers are provided to help consumers understand basic information about the drug. Some question examples include: why is the drug prescribed; what precautions should a patient follow; and, what side effects can the drug cause?
MedlinePlus also provides links to trusted and authoritative health information from other national organizations and government websites.
Because patients’ needs vary, nurses should be aware of resources that are available, particularly those that have been designed to address patients’ special needs. MedlinePlus resources provide easily understandable health information that can be used regardless of patient age, background or reading level. Patient education materials from MedlinePlus have been written at a 4th to 6th grade reading level. You can select the “Easy to Read” tab and it will guide you to an A-Z list of easy-to-read materials from authoritative sources. Other materials are available on MedlinePlus for patients with poor vision.
This slide shows a map of the “Go Local” project, one of the newer resources still under development through Medline Plus. If the project is already completed in a particular state, you can click on that state to find local resources for health-related issues. These resources include items such as locating a facility, health care providers, and/or identifying programs and services related to specific diseases and health issues.
Continue to visit the LISTEN website, at listenuphealth.org, for other helpful tips on using technology; and, seeking, evaluating, and applying information in nursing to support evidence-based nursing practice.
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This project is supported by funds from the Division of Nursing (DN), Bureau of Health Professions (BHP), HRSA, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any official endorsement be inferred by, the DN, BHP, HRSA, DHHS, or the US Government.