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Effects of a public website with evidence based patient information: the example of Thuisarts.nl (GPathome)

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Background & Aim: Many patients seek online for health information and use this information to decide whether or not to visit a doctor. In 2012 the Dutch College of GPs (NHG) launched a non-commercial evidence based, public website, named Thuisarts.nl (GPathome). The aim was to 1) guide patients in the labyrinth of health-related information on the internet, 2) support GPs in patient education and 3) produce patient versions of the evidence-based Dutch College practice guidelines.

In 2013 a GPathome app was launched. Since its launch, the website has grown to become one of the most visited health care website in the Netherlands.

Methods: The content of GPathome is largely based on the evidence-based practice guidelines of the Dutch College. Guideline updates are synchronized with patient situations on Thuisarts.nl. Each Thuisarts topic consists of several 'patient situations', for example: I need to start inhalation medication. Information on what to do and when to contact the GP is given. The situations can include illustrations, short video's, patient decision aids and e-health self-management tools like a self-test on alcohol use.

Results: 90% of all Dutch GPs use Thuisarts.nl in their daily practice. In 2015 Thuisarts had 14 million unique (IP-adress) visitors and 44 million page views on a population of 17 million people. Patients say they feel better informed and that GPathome contributed to their self-reliance. Research shows that the primary care consultation rate in the Netherlands decreased two years after the launch of this website. In the workshop we want to demonstrate the website, and share experiences on patient education (PE) in our countries. What is the relation between PE and guidelines? What are the different levels of PE? How do GPs use PE before, during and after consultation? Tips and tricks from the GPathome team.

Conclusions: reliable public health information guides patients on their search through the medical internet chaos. GPathome reinforces the position of patients and primary care in health care.