

Minnesota Asthma Information Center Website

Prepared for the American Lung Association of Minnesota
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January 27, 2004

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an analysis of the ease of use and navigation of Minnesota Asthma Information Center Website (www.alamn.org). No effort was made to assess the accuracy or quality of the information provided on the website because the content was subject to extensive formative evaluation as the website was first developed.

METHODOLOGY

Nine people were asked to individually view and use the Minnesota Asthma Information Center website. Of the nine reviewers, four are experts in the public health field and five are parents of young children who are personally interested in asthma and do not work in a health care setting.

While viewing the website, participants were asked to find answers to asthma related questions. The questions were provided by the Minnesota Institute of Public Health (MIPH) evaluation team and were meant to guide users through the website.

As participants viewed the website they made comments about the website appearance, content, navigation, location, and their overall impressions.

FINDINGS

Upon review of the participant's comments about the Minnesota Information Center Website, it is clear that overall the site is well received. However, the people reviewing the site focused on what could be changed, rather than on what is working well. Many of the comments received lead to making simple changes in the website to make it more user-friendly.

Unless otherwise noted, the findings reported below reflect the perceptions of a majority of reviewers.

Appearance

1. Main page of website is cheerful and uncluttered.
2. Colors and graphics throughout the website are simple.
3. Not every menu item on the left of main page has a corresponding picture to click on.
4. Website flows nicely and is well organized.
5. Information is easy to read.
6. One reviewer reported that some areas of the text to be too crowded.

Content

1. Reviewers found it easy to find answers to questions.
See attached document for questions given to users.
2. Reviewers found it hard to find out how many people are affected by asthma.
3. One of the reviewers stated that the website needs better organization.
It is hard to find specifics in the General Information page and it may be easier if more categories are used to divide up the information.

Navigation

1. The “Go direct to:” box on ALA homepage is ideal for navigating, but is not available on the Information Center website.
A user can go to the “search” function on the Information Center website, but it came up with no hits for incidence or prevalence.
2. The “search” feature doesn’t take user directly to section.
When using the “search” feature, it takes the user to top of page with the word so that user has to scroll through and look for the appropriate section.
3. The navigation can become tiresome by continuously scrolling down through pages and pages of information.
4. Reviewers are used to looking at the left column for main headings and in the upper right for quick search items.

Site Location

1. The Asthma Information Center logo under “Our featured sites:” appeared like an advertisement to reviewers and required them to go through more steps than necessary to access the relevant information.
2. A typical user may not know that the Information Center homepage exists and will first go to ALA website.
Users can have their questions answered using the “Go direct to:” box on ALA website.
The ALA website does not grab the users attention and direct them to the Information Center website.

Links from Information Center pages that do not work:

There are a variety of links that do not work correctly, these include:

1. Link from the picture of Community Center on main page does not work.
2. Games
 - ❑ A for Asthma – link leads to pup up ads, not the site described
 - ❑ Asthma Busters – link works from the links page, but not from the games page
 - ❑ Asthma Kids – specified server cannot be found
 - ❑ Dustmite shootout – specified server cannot be found
 - ❑ Getastmahelp.com – link works to site, but cannot view all of page

3. Local

- ❑ Children's Hospitals and Clinics Patient/Family Education Materials A-Z
- ❑ Health Partners' "Take control of your asthma" class
- ❑ Hennepin County Medical Center Pediatric Asthma Collaborative Workgroup Written Asthma Action Plan
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning Coordinated School Health
- ❑ Minnesota Department of Health Indoor Air Issues

4. National

- ❑ Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics, Inc.
- ❑ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
- ❑ National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

5. Products

- ❑ National Allergy Supply, Inc.

OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WEBSITE

The following options are offered as approaches to improving the website based on feedback of the reviewers.

Appearance

1. Create a corresponding picture on the main page for all menu items on the left.
2. Space bullets out evenly on the child care page.

Content

1. Create a frequently asked questions page or include asthma statistics from recent years on General Information page.
2. Divide up the information from the General Information page into several categories, e.g. What is Asthma? Symptoms? What happens? etc.

Navigation

1. Change "search" feature so it takes user directly to the appropriate section on the page.
2. Change the format of the main page so the "search" function is in the upper right corner.
3. Place keywords at top of all pages (some already have this) for all sections so user can go directly to desired text.
4. Place a link at bottom of pages to go "Back to Top" of page.

Site Location

1. Create easier access to the site from the ALA main page. On the ALA homepage, list "For patients, family and friends" as a link to Information Center website above the "For professionals, researchers and students" link.

Links

1. Fix broken links. Many of the links do not work or lead to unrelated sites. Add new links if current links are outdated or no longer available.