75% of Brits Use Google To Try And Cure Themselves Rather Than Wait For An NHS Appointment

By Hank Campbell — December 5, 2017

Critics of the United Kingdom's government health plan, the National Health Service, sit on both sides. Doctors say hospitals are understaffed and they are underpaid [1], the public gripes about long wait times [2]. There are numerous concerns about quality of care [3].

Imagine if more people used it.

Luckily for the UK they don't. A new survey finds that instead almost 75 percent of the British use "Dr. Google" - a search engine - to diagnose and treat themselves rather than schedule an appointment through the NHS. Even though their medical care is "free." (1)

You know, they are probably right handling most temporary conditions on their own, because they are time-based. People who buy Zicam or Coldcalm in America would be better off Googling fun home remedies and waiting a few days than wasting their money.(2) As Edzard Ernst, M.D., puts it, in those cases nature cures the disease while alt-medicine, naturopathic and homeopathic products or techniques simply make people feel involved [4]. What fun remedies are just as effective as Zicam? Buzzfeed, who sell huge amounts of advertising using cat videos, Kim Kardashian, and of course fun cold remedies [5], promotes the Flu Buster Clementine Creamsicle Smoothie in the same article every few years. In Russia, a drink made of egg yolk, honey, milk, butter and cognac is the way to go. (3) They're both correct, the cold will be gone in a few days using those home remedies, just like if they had done nothing at all. Or bought Zicam.
If this is appealing to you, you're not really sick.

We are generally an action-oriented society. People want to do something. And that is how supplement companies and homeopaths and naturopaths (generally speaking, if someone's title ends in "path", walk away) and gurus make money. They convince customers that pesky medicine, with its double-blind clinical trials against placebos (like Zicam and smoothies) is a Vast Corporate Conspiracy To Promote Science. (4) The public would be better off doing nothing.

Forty percent of Brits say they do just that. Nothing. Remember when men used to be criticized for never going to the doctor? The NHS now counts on it as part of their financial model. Otherwise the wait times would be even worse.

Yet there is not much hope the system will get fixed enough that more people will go to a doctor, even if they have an ear infection or chest pain. The thing you know is better than the thing you don't.
NOTES:

(1) Sixty-six percent won't even go for a toothache. However, 70 percent believe a change in their diet will help. They are sort-of right. While a specific food will not ward off illness, fewer calories overall will ward off obesity, which has overtaken smoking as the number one lifestyle killer in the UK.

(2) In the case of Coldcalm, not just better off financially, since it contains belladonna, which can be toxic when taken orally [6].

(3) China has one that's basically just stupid. Burning Ai Ye (wormwood). How did these people survive this long when they think smoke won't make throat irritation worse?

(4) There is a dangerous downside, of course. The naturalistic fallacy that takes hold out of necessity when health care is difficult to get becomes a breeding ground for anti-science beliefs and the frauds who exploit the public financially by preying on their lack of knowledge and desire to do something. It's why we have cases of a child dying because some Chinese Traditional Medicine crackpot believed slapping cures diabetes [7]. Or that injecting spice into someone [8] will go anywhere but to a mortuary.