

News Tools For TrustWorthy Health Information

The HONcode Toolbar

Searching for health information on the Internet has just become easier - and safer - thanks to a new multifunctional browser plugin from Health On the Net Foundation (HON), the Geneva, Switzerland-based non-profit organisation, best known for its code of ethical conduct, the "HONcode", a standard for trustworthy online information used by thousands of health and medical web publishers.

The HONcode requires that information providers disclose potential conflicts of interest, provide author's credentials for medical information, and address thorny issues of privacy and confidentiality, which vary according to legal jurisdiction.

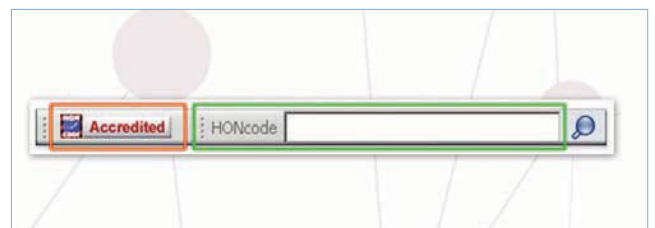
The HON tool bar is the first of its kind, according to HON executive director, Celia Boyer. *"Given the critical nature of health information and the unregulated environment of the Internet, web surfers need all the help they can get to make sure the sites they visit have been checked by an independent authority,"* says Boyer. *"HON has worked since 1995 to make the Internet a safer place for patients, caregivers and medical professionals who rely increasingly on the web for answers to everyday health questions."*

The HON tool bar allows web surfers to highlight and select text from a web page and search for HON-certified sites

about that subject. A search function explores the HONcode certified web sites, with nearly 5,000 web sites participating in the search. The "HONcode status" feature goes one step further: it lets the user check whether a site bearing the HONcode seal is in compliance with the Code.

The HON tool bar is a small software program (plugin) that can be easily added to the most popular web browsers. The three tool bar functionalities make use of HON's online services to help users find reliable information on the full range of health subjects. The HON tool bar was developed jointly with NetUnion, a software development firm in Lausanne, Switzerland within the European research project ACTIVE-HEALTH.

The HONcode Toolbar can be downloaded from the HON Web site www.HealthOnNet.org/.



HONcode Toolbar: search engine and checker of the certification status