

# Toward Wellness:

## *Women Seeking Health Information*



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# Outline

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- ◆ Introduction (research gaps & research questions)
- ◆ Survey Instrument (development)
- ◆ Data Collection (method & demographics)
- ◆ Findings & Conclusions

# Research Gaps

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- ◆ Understanding of health information-seeking behavior of women
- ◆ Assessment of women's awareness of quality health resources available in multiple channels (formal, informal, interpersonal, mass media, hybrid)

# What's The Deal With Women?

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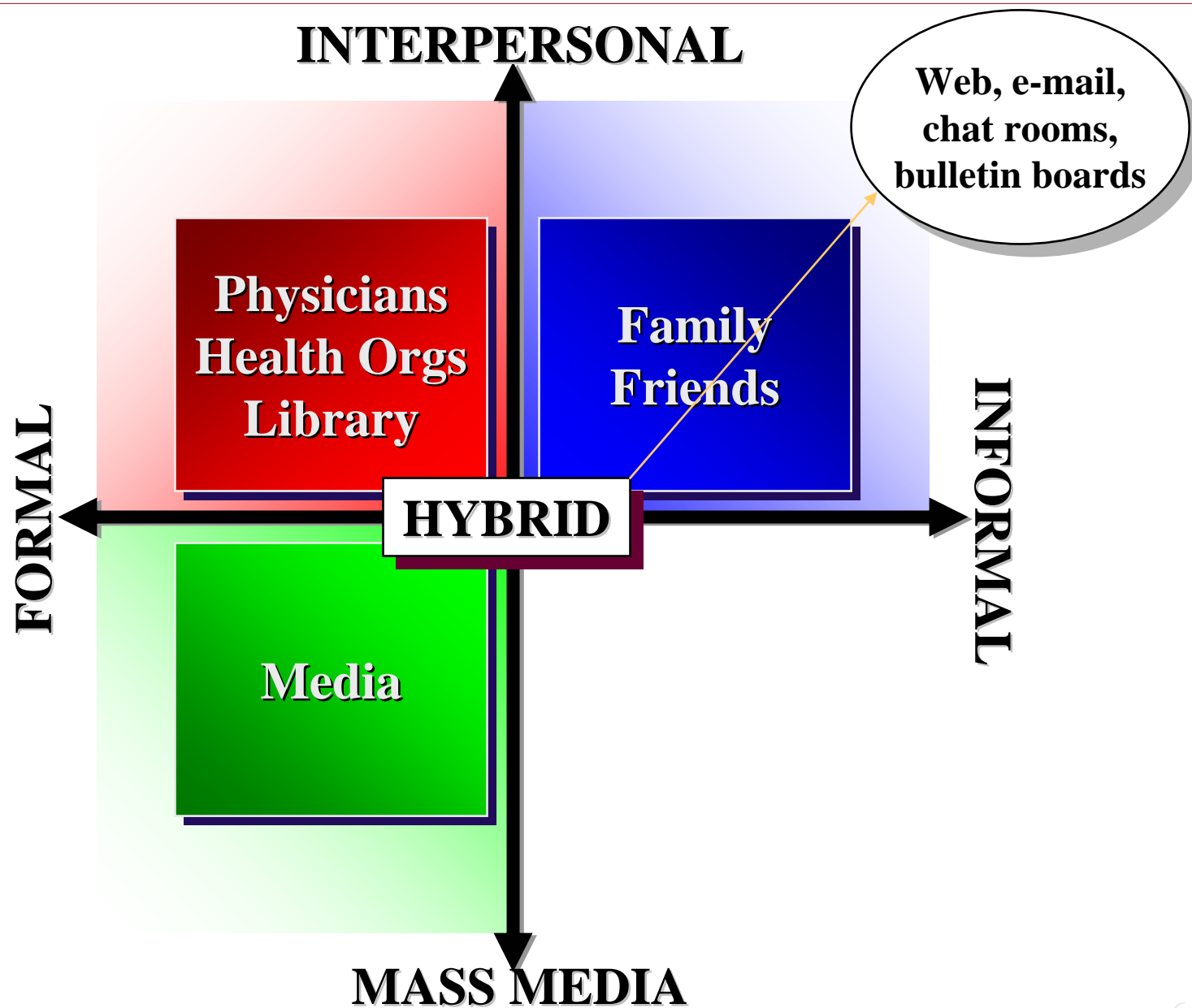
- ◆ “...is a general impression that women use physician services more often than men; in particular, women are thought to be more attuned to care of their health and more likely to seek preventive services” [Muller 1990]
- ◆ “...women have guarded the health of their families since the dawn of human time ... using special knowledge received from older women” [Stern 1986]
- ◆ Others have noted women as “gatekeepers” for health

# Research Questions

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- ◆ RQ1:
  - Why do women look for health information? (*What is information need?*)
- ◆ RQ2:
  - Where do women look for health information? (*What search strategies are employed for filling information need?*)
- ◆ RQ3:
  - How do women use health information?
- ◆ RQ4:
  - What health resources are women aware of?
    - Printed sources (books/reference guides)
    - Web-based sources
    - Organizational sources
    - Magazines/journals

# Channels of Healthcare Information



# Survey Instrument

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## ◆ Sources:

- *Pew Internet & American Life Project*
- *California Healthcare Foundation QUALITY Initiative Questionnaire*
- *Kaiser/Lifetime Vital Signs Index*

## ◆ 260+ items on 10 pages.

## ◆ Sections:

1. Why Do Women Look For Health Information? (RQ1)
2. How Do Women Use Health Information? (RQ3)
3. Where Do Women Look For Health Information? (RQ2)
4. Specific Health Resources (awareness) (RQ4)
5. Demographics

# Data Collection

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## ◆ Sources:

- In-person: public libraries, senior citizen centers, churches, retirement communities, health centers, playgrounds, shopping centers
- By mail: various women's organizations

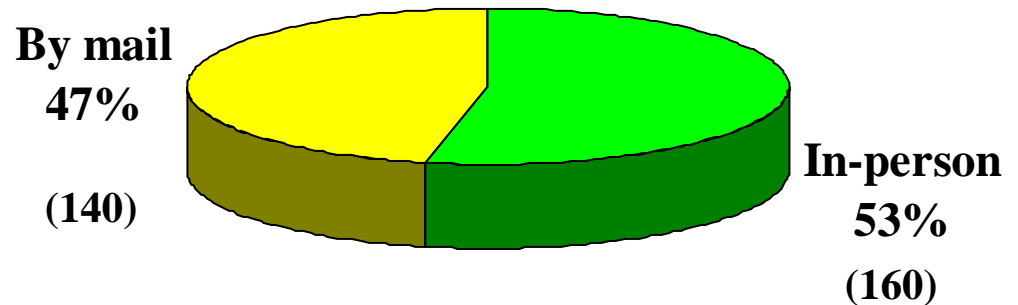
## ◆ Data analysis:

- Frequency distributions & cross-tabs

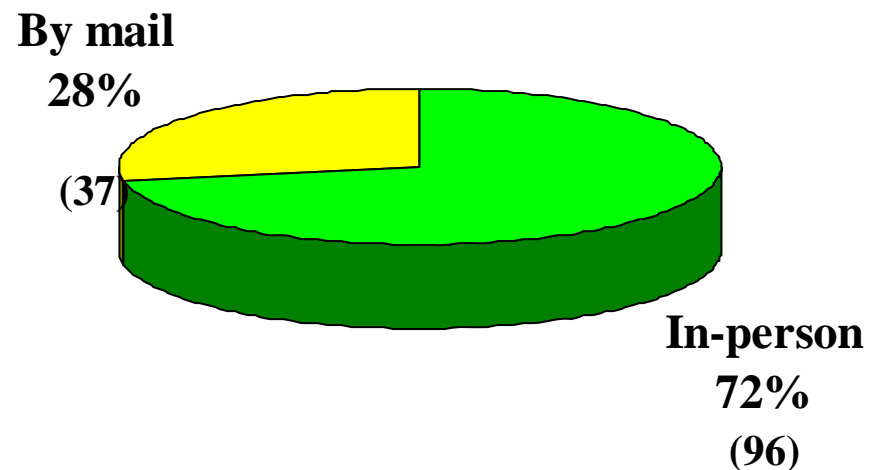


# Data Collection (cont'd)

- ◆ 300 surveys distributed in urban, suburban & rural PA & NJ:



- ◆ 133 returned (44% response rate):



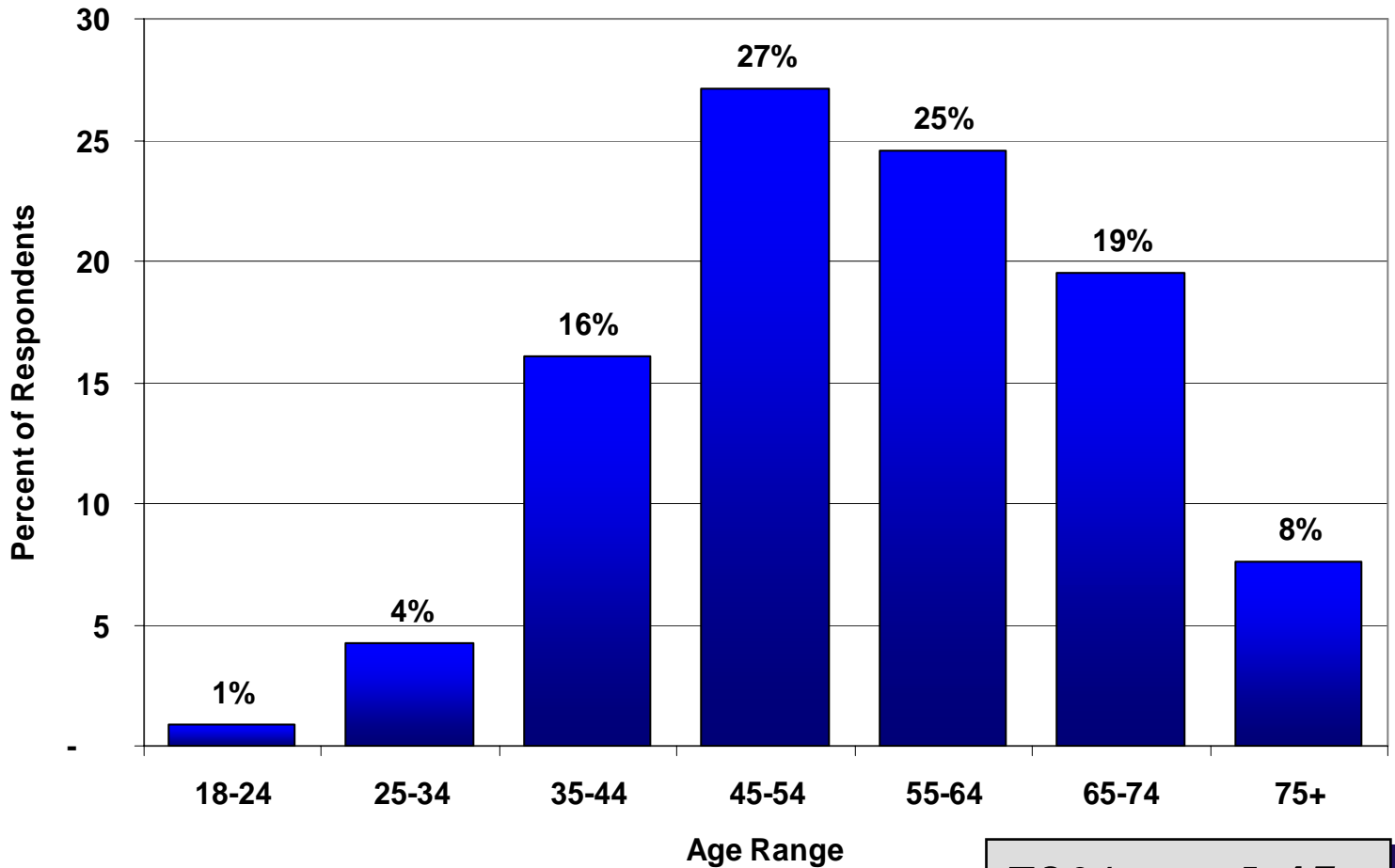
# Data Collection (cont'd)

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- ◆ 119 respondents indicated they had looked for healthcare-related information for themselves or family member

# Respondent Demographics

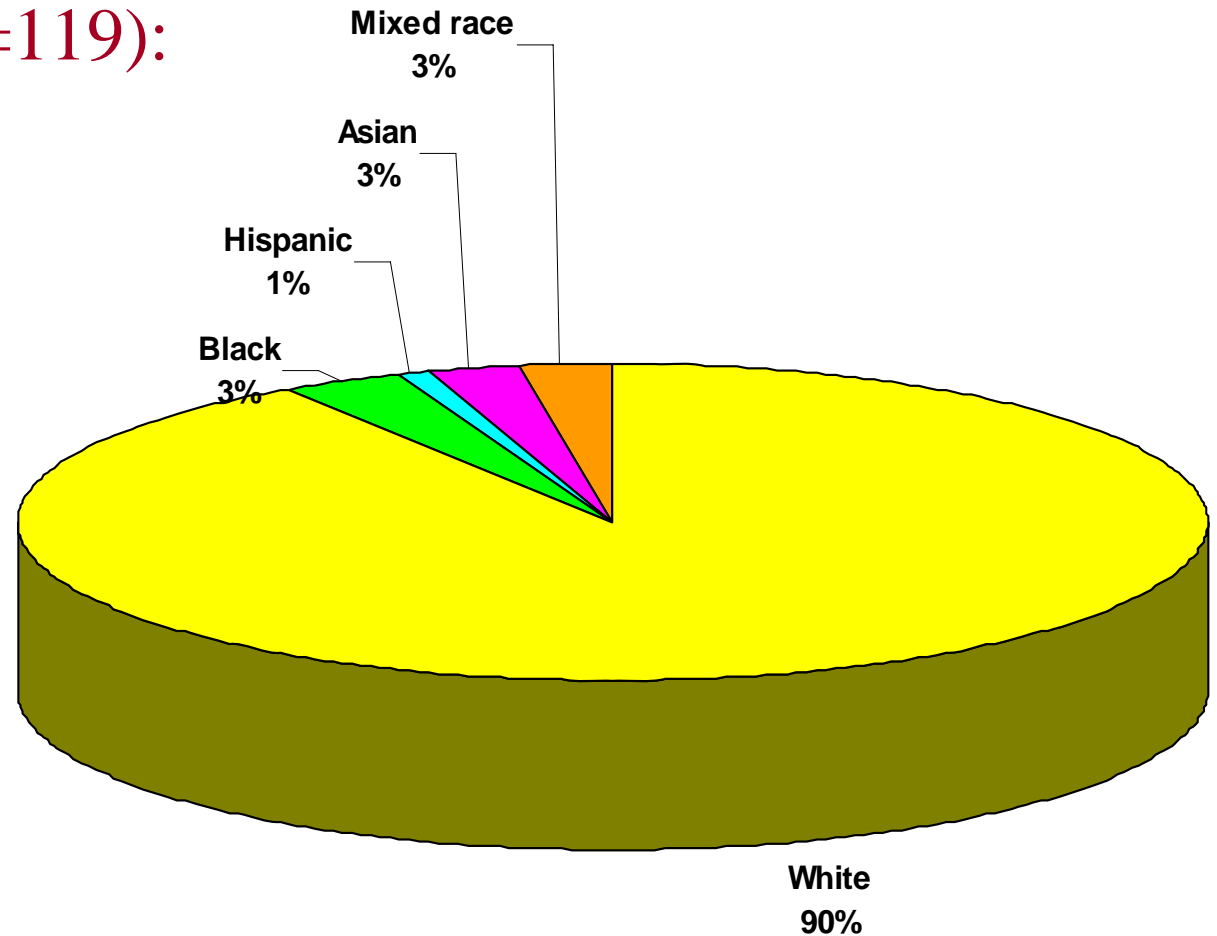
## ◆ Age range (n=118):



**79% aged 45+**

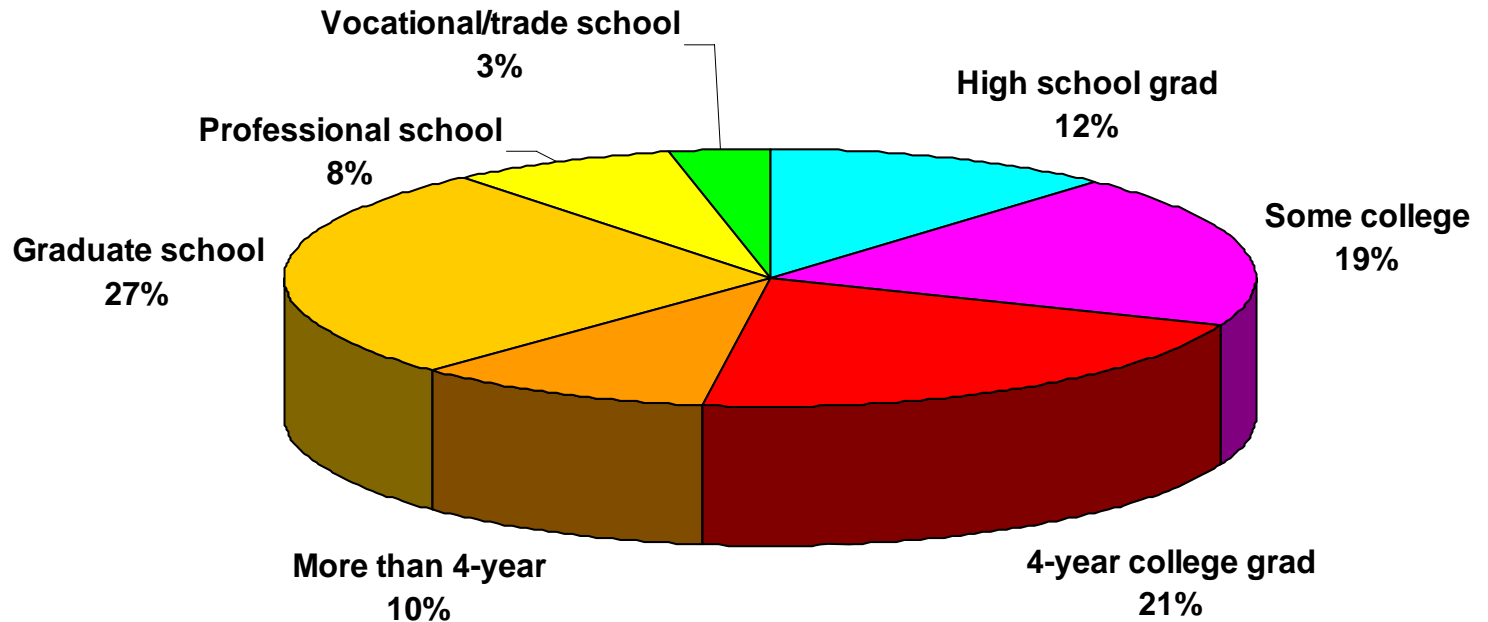
# Respondent Demographics (cont'd)

◆ Race (n=119):



# Respondent Demographics (cont'd)

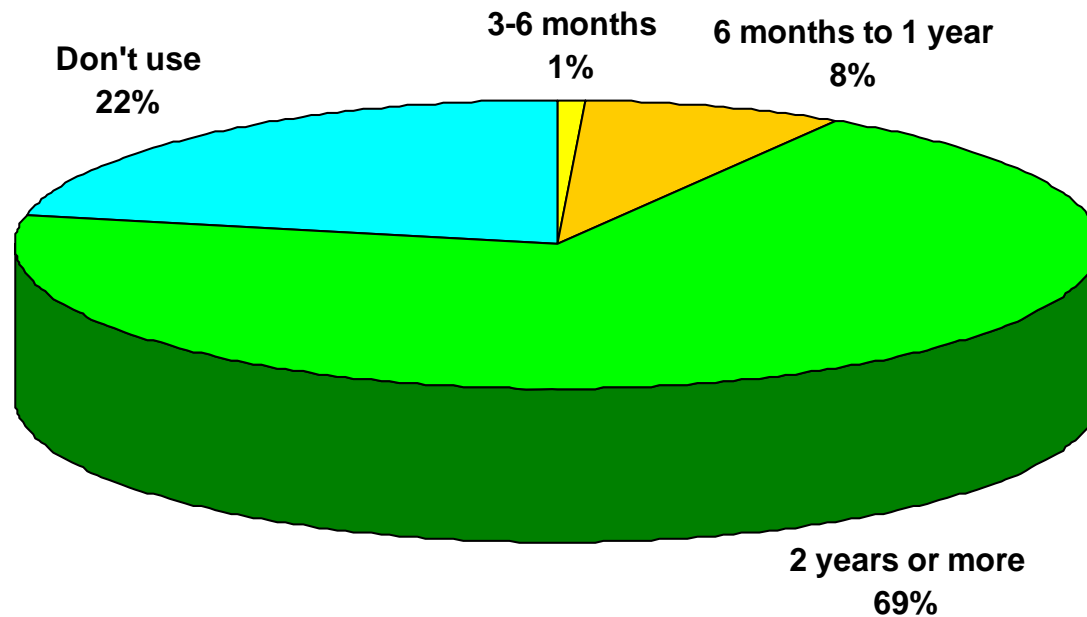
## ◆ Highest level of education (n=119):



**77% had at least some college**

# Respondent Demographics (cont'd)

## ◆ Web use (n=115):



**78% have used Web**

# Findings: Research Question #1

- RQ1: Why do women look for health info?
  - Did you ever seek health information because?

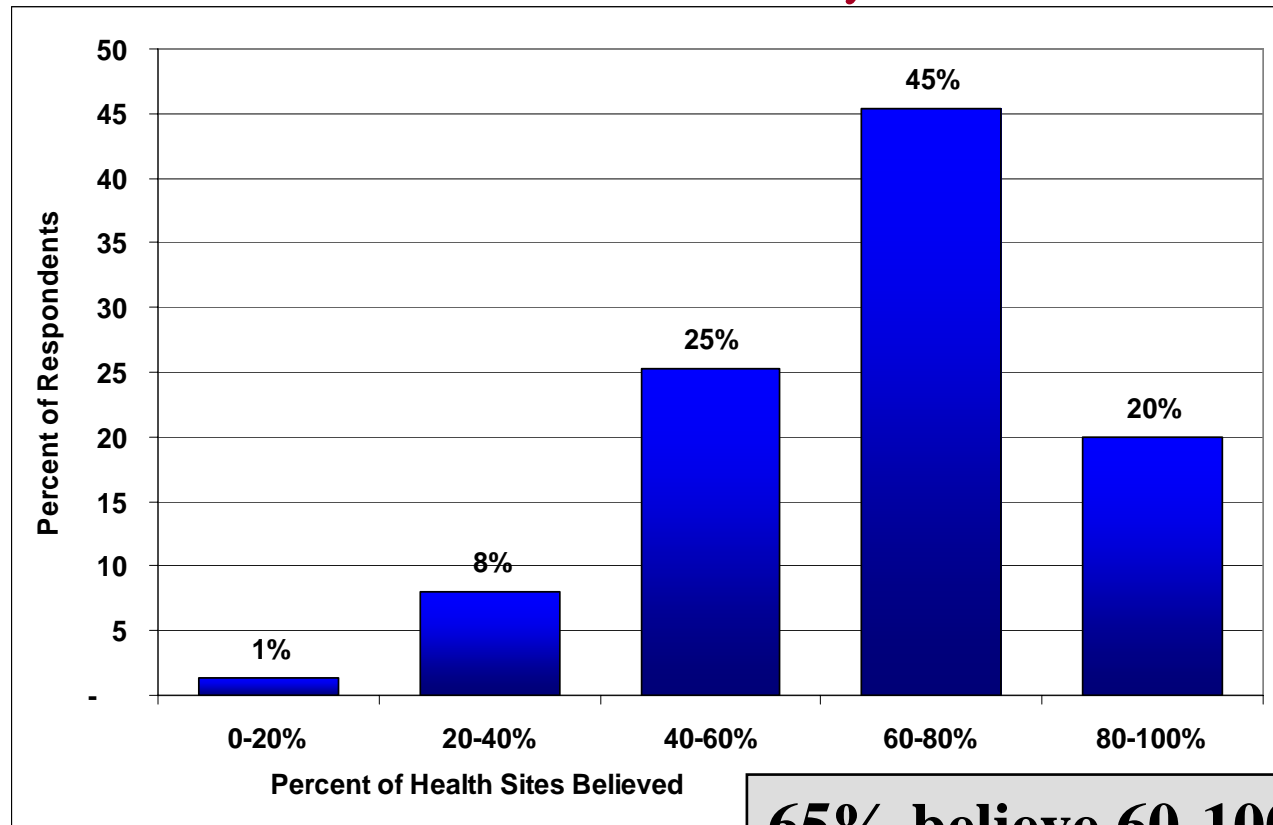
Top 10 (by descending positive response):

Rank	Response	Yes		No		Total
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N
1	...you wanted to supplement the information given by the medical professional	94	79.7%	24	20.3%	118
2	...you wanted to find out more information on your own	94	79.7%	24	20.3%	118
3	...you wanted information about specific symptoms	77	65.3%	41	34.7%	118
4	...you wanted information for someone else	75	63.6%	43	36.4%	118
5	...you wanted information about the prognosis of a disease/medical condition	64	54.2%	54	45.8%	118
6	...you wanted information about nutrition	62	52.5%	56	47.5%	118
7	...you needed to make a decision about medical treatment	55	46.6%	63	53.4%	118
8	...you wanted information for disease prevention (e.g., cancer, heart disease)	46	39.0%	72	61.0%	118
9	...you needed to make a decision about a medication	46	39.0%	72	61.0%	118
10	...you wanted information about fitness	45	38.1%	73	61.9%	118

- Role of women's agency

# Findings: Research Question #2 (cont'd)

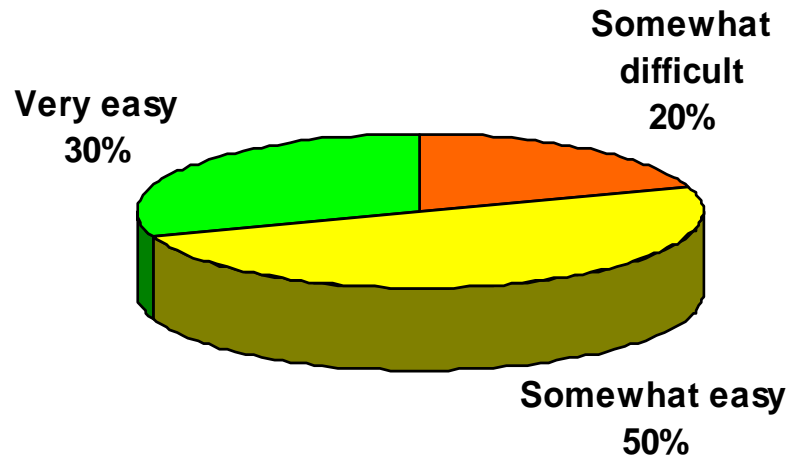
- ◆ RQ2: Where do women look for health info?
  - Getting advice about health on World Wide Web:
    - How much information on Web do you believe?





# Findings: Research Question #2 (cont'd)

- ◆ RQ2: Where do women look for health info?
  - Ease of use vs. usefulness:
    - How easy or difficult is it usually to look for health info?



- But:
  - Do you usually find info you need (Q1.08)? 91% did
  - How useful is info you find (Q1.09)? Only about 50%(?)

# Findings: Research Question #2 (cont'd)

- ◆ RQ2: Where do women look for health info?
  - How likely were you to use the following?

Top 10 (by descending likelihood):

Rank	Variable	Likely		Unlikely		Totals
		N	Pct	N	Pct	
1	Doctor	118	100.0%	-	0.0%	118
2	Book (medical, health)	110	94.0%	7	6.0%	117
3	People with same condition	101	89.4%	12	10.6%	113
4	Family or friends	103	87.3%	15	12.7%	118
5	Nurses or other medical professionals	100	86.2%	16	13.8%	116
6	Pharmacist's drug information	92	80.0%	23	20.0%	115
7	Website	85	75.2%	28	24.8%	113
8	Brochure/pamphlet	83	74.8%	28	25.2%	111
9	Library (public)	83	72.2%	32	27.8%	115
10	Medical report (printed)	79	69.3%	35	30.7%	114

“Likely”: very likely or somewhat likely

“Unlikely”: very unlikely or somewhat unlikely

# Findings: Research Question #2 (cont'd)

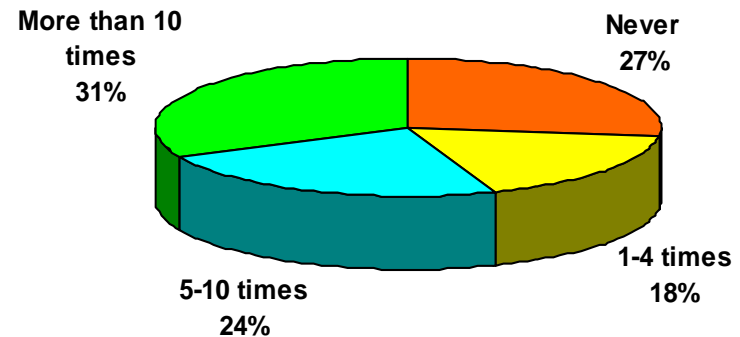
- ◆ RQ2: Where do women look for health info?
  - What is your preferred source?

(by descending positive response):

Rank	Response	N	Pct	Cumulative Percent
1	Doctor	44	43.6%	43.6%
2	World Wide Web site	17	16.8%	60.4%
3	Book (medical, health)	13	12.9%	73.3%
4	Family and friends	9	8.9%	82.2%
5	Nurses or others in the medical profession	4	4.0%	86.1%
6	Medical report (printed)	3	3.0%	89.1%
7	Library - Public	3	3.0%	92.1%
8	People with the same medical condition	2	2.0%	94.1%
9	Coworkers	1	1.0%	95.0%
10	Group discussion	1	1.0%	96.0%
11	Seminars/programs	1	1.0%	97.0%
12	Newspapers	1	1.0%	98.0%
13	Magazines	1	1.0%	99.0%
14	Pharmacist's drug information	1	1.0%	100.0%

# Findings: Research Question #2 (cont'd)

- ◆ RQ2: Where do women look for health info?
  - # of times used Web to look for advice or information about healthcare:



- Relation between age & number of times Web used for health information:
  - In general, less usage among 18-34 year olds & 65+, most among 35-65 year olds

# Findings: Research Question #3

- ◆ RQ3: How do women use health information?
  - Had they ever talked later to a doctor, nurse or medical professional about the health information they had found:
    - 82% “Yes” (18% “No”)
  - Did information you got ever?:  
(by descending positive response):

Rank	Response	Yes		No		Total
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N
1	Did the information you got ever affect any of your decisions about treatments	92	83%	19	17%	111
2	Did the information you got ever improve way you eat	83	80%	21	20%	104
3	Did the information you got ever improve way you exercise	67	65%	36	35%	103
4	Did the information you got ever affect any of your decisions about health treatments	74	75%	25	25%	99

# Findings: Research Question #4

- ◆ RQ4: What health resources are women aware of?
  - For each resource, how aware are you?

Print/Book resources (by descending awareness):

Rank	Response	AWARE		NOT AWARE		Total
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N
1	Physician's Desk Reference	91	82.7%	19	17.3%	110
2	Merck Manual of Diagnosis & Therapy	69	60.5%	45	39.5%	114
3	Physician's Desk Reference For Nonprescription Drugs...	59	53.2%	52	46.8%	111
4	Our Bodies, Ourselves	58	52.3%	53	47.7%	111
5	Harvard Medical School Family Health Guide	45	40.9%	65	59.1%	110
6	American College of Physicians Complete Home Medical Guide	45	40.9%	65	59.1%	110
7	Directory of Board Certified Medical Specialists	41	36.3%	72	63.7%	113
8	Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV	37	33.6%	73	66.4%	110
9	Jane Brody's Nutrition Book	35	31.8%	75	68.2%	110
10	Essential Guide To Prescription Drugs	30	26.8%	82	73.2%	112
11	Complete Guide To Symptoms, Illness & Surgery	23	20.5%	89	79.5%	112
12	Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine	20	18.2%	90	81.8%	110
13	Physician's Desk Reference For Herbal Medicines	17	15.3%	94	84.7%	111
14	Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary	17	15.0%	96	85.0%	113

# Findings: Research Question #4 (cont'd)

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- ◆ RQ4: What health resources are women aware of?
  - For each resource, how aware are you?

Web resources (by descending awareness):

NEXT SLIDE...

# Findings: Awareness of Web Sources

Rank	Response	AWARE		NOT AWARE		Total
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N
1	Mayo Clinic	81	77.1%	24	22.9%	105
2	<b>Centers For Disease Control</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>76.6%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>107</b>
3	<b>US Food and Drug Administration</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>76.6%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>107</b>
4	<b>Office of The Surgeon General</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>68.6%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31.4%</b>	<b>105</b>
5	<b>US Department of Health</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>68.2%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31.8%</b>	<b>107</b>
6	Individual Drug Company Website	60	56.6%	46	43.4%	106
7	<b>National Institutes of Health</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>55.1%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>107</b>
8	Merck Manual	57	52.8%	51	47.2%	108
9	<b>USDA: Nutrition and Your Health</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>47.6%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52.4%</b>	<b>105</b>
10	<b>National Institute of Mental Health</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>46.2%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>53.8%</b>	<b>106</b>
11	<b>State of NJ, Department of Health</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>43.4%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>56.6%</b>	<b>106</b>
12	National Women's Health Network	38	35.8%	68	64.2%	106
13	<b>MEDLINEPlus</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30.8%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>69.2%</b>	<b>107</b>
14	American Medical Women's Association	31	29.2%	75	70.8%	106
15	<b>National Library of Medicine</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>71.0%</b>	<b>107</b>
16	<b>National Health Information Center</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26.9%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>73.1%</b>	<b>104</b>
17	<b>Consumer.gov-Health</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>76.0%</b>	<b>100</b>
18	<b>Food and Nutrition Information Center</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>78.1%</b>	<b>105</b>
19	<b>Healthfinder</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18.7%</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>81.3%</b>	<b>107</b>
20	National Women's Health Information Network	19	18.4%	84	81.6%	103
21	<b>Center For Drug Evaluation and Research</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>106</b>
22	<b>Clinical Trials.gov</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>104</b>
23	<b>National Center For Health Statistics</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>85.7%</b>	<b>105</b>
24	Healthy NJ-Information For Healthy Living	9	8.5%	97	91.5%	106
25	Consumer and Patient Health Information Section	9	8.4%	98	91.6%	107



# Findings: Research Question #4 (cont'd)

- ◆ RQ4: What health resources are women aware of?
  - For each resource, how aware are you?

Top 10 Organizational resources (by descending awareness):

Rank	Response	AWARE		NOT AWARE		Total
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N
1	American Cancer Society	103	90.4%	11	9.6%	114
2	American Heart Association	101	88.6%	13	11.4%	114
3	American Diabetes Association	97	84.3%	18	15.7%	115
4	American Association of Retired Persons	95	81.9%	21	18.1%	116
5	American Lung Association	79	69.3%	35	30.7%	114
6	National Osteoporosis Foundation	68	60.2%	45	39.8%	113
7	National Institute of Arthritis...	42	37.8%	69	62.2%	111
8	International Women's Health Coalition	25	21.9%	89	78.1%	114
9	Endometriosis Association	23	20.2%	91	79.8%	114
10	Ovarian Cancer National Alliance	18	15.9%	95	84.1%	113

# Findings: Research Question #4 (cont'd)

- ◆ RQ4: What health resources are women aware of?
  - For each resource, how aware are you?

Magazines/Journals resources (by descending awareness):

Rank	Response	AWARE		NOT AWARE		Total
		N	Pct	N	Pct	N
1	Prevention Magazine	104	92.0%	9	8.0%	113
2	Consumer Reports	103	91.2%	10	8.8%	113
3	Harvard Health Letter	56	49.6%	57	50.4%	113
4	Johns Hopkins Medical Letter	36	31.6%	78	68.4%	114
5	Women & Health	25	22.1%	88	77.9%	113

# Limitations

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- ◆ Responses to our survey instrument were not random, as responses were gathered from specific geographic locations
- ◆ Our instrument included specific resources to investigate awareness, but some respondents may have been aware of *additional* resources
- ◆ Helpful to conduct semi-structured interviews to provide respondents opportunity to expand on specific responses (specifically in regard to questions of “ways of knowing”)

# Conclusions

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- ◆ We noted several aspects of health information-seeking that may have implications for health information providers, specifically those attempting to reach women
- ◆ Respondents are active seekers & generally did make use of located information to improve their health behaviors

# Conclusions (cont'd)

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- ◆ In general, across all channels, women indicated some ambivalence about information located (i.e., conflicting responses regarding ease of locating information, usefulness of information found, & whether or not their questions are answered)

# Conclusions (cont'd)

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- ◆ How can information providers better reach female health information consumer with reliable health & medical information resources?
  - Kuhlthau proposed mediation at uncertainty stage in ISP model & she found that family & friends were frequently selected at this stage

# Conclusions (cont'd)

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- ◆ To “tap in” to tendency to seek healthcare information through interpersonal & informal means (friends & family), information providers may consider community outreach to establish themselves as less formal (though professional) resource
- ◆ Opportunities exist for information providers to play more pro-active role in providing reliable health & medical information

# Further Study

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- ◆ Expand on Web-based information seeking:
  - Perceived ease of use vs. reliability, usefulness & thoroughness
  - Relative importance of mediator when utilizing Web at various levels of uncertainty
- ◆ Satisfaction level with information found & information-seeking process itself:
  - Level of difficulty to look for information, whether women usually find what they need, how useful is information & are all questions ultimately answered
- ◆ Funded research (NOW)?
- ◆ Ultimate role for electronically facilitated delivery of healthcare-related information?



# Cartoon of The Day

