



# International Students' Health Information Seeking: Motivations, Barriers and Changes

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## Introduction

- ❖ Students study in other countries and are defined as international students.
- ❖ International students may face health issues in their daily lives and need health information to support their health and medical-related decisions.

## Research Questions

- ❖ What motivates international students' health information seeking?
- ❖ How do they choose different information sources?
- ❖ What are the barriers to international students' online health information seeking?
- ❖ What are international students' behavior patterns for health information seeking?
- ❖ Are there any differences between what they do as international students compared to what they did when they were not international students?

## Literature Review

- ❖ **Health information needs:**
  - 1) Promoting healthy lifestyles [1]
  - 2) Managing health issues [1,2]
  - 3) Preventing specific medical conditions or aiding family and friends [3-5]
- ❖ **Preferences for health information sources:** [6]
  - 1) Personal networks (friends, coworkers, family members)
  - 2) Traditional media healthcare providers
  - 3) The Internet.
- ❖ **Similar challenges as domestic students** [7]:
  - 1) Academic pressures
  - 2) Financial concerns
  - 3) Feelings of isolation
- ❖ **Unique pressures and struggles due to adjusting to new contexts** [7]

## Research Design

- ❖ **Sampling:** Convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Participants were recruited at the University of Oklahoma.
- ❖ **Eleven participants:** Undergraduates and graduates, recruited through text and orally.
- ❖ **Semi-structured interviews:** Face-to-face or via Zoom, based on participants' preferences.
- ❖ **Information collected:**
  - 1) Background (Nationality, native language, gender, race, age, and educational level)
  - 2) Experiences with health information seeking
- ❖ **All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed**
- ❖ **Analysis:**
  - 1) Inductive coding allowed themes to naturally emerge from the data
  - 2) Researchers identified recurring concepts and connections

Detailed Demographic Tables

<b>Gender</b>	
Male	5
Female	6
<b>Education level</b>	
Undergraduate	3
Master students	3
Doctoral students	5
<b>Native language</b>	
Chinese	4
Persian	2
Portuguese	1
Turkish	1
Nepali	1
Bengali	1
Serbian	1
<b>Region</b>	
Europe	1
Africa	1
Middle East	3
East Asia	4
South Asia	2

Eleven students were recruited. They represent diverse nationalities, with none being native English speakers. Only one participant received education in English within their home country.

These individuals come from a range of academic disciplines, including sociology, politics, public health, medicine, and business.

## Findings

### Four major themes arose after analyzing data

#### PURPOSES

- International students' health information needs encompass health insurance, fertility, vaccines, fitness, healthy eating, and diseases.
- They cared about not only their own health but also their family members' and friends' health.
- None indicated that they were concerned about insurance and cost while still in their home countries.

#### BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS

- English and their native tongues were utilized, and some individuals believed that information in English was more reliable.
- Some opt not to seek health services due to financial constraints, difficulties in communicating with healthcare providers, and transportation challenges.

#### INFLUENCING FACTORS

- Participants emphasized the importance of health information literacy, recognizing the need for skills to evaluate information sources effectively.
- Language barriers led to feelings of nervousness, and they would be looking up English medical terms before doctor visits.
- Uncertainty regarding medical system and insurance coverage raised worries about potential healthcare expenses.

#### INFORMATION SOURCES

- Before becoming international students, they relied on hospitals and family members for health information.
- After becoming international students, they turned to friends, especially those with medical backgrounds, and the Internet due to its convenience, instant updates, affordability, and fewer language barriers.

- ❖ Preferences for information sources changed after becoming an international student
- ❖ Students were more inclined to use the Internet as an information source because of its convenience and cheapness
- ❖ Most international students used English and their native language when conducting searches; many believed the information in English was more reliable than that in their own language.
- ❖ Due to language, economic, and other barriers, international students find it difficult to access health information.

## Future Directions

- ❖ Identify the social and cultural factors influencing international students' health information seeking behaviors.
- ❖ Develop more targeted interventions and support mechanisms to meet the unique needs of international students.

## References

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