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When and Who: Spotting Fake Health News

Let's continue our look at [how to check health news](#) that you aren't sure is real or fake. I hope you've had a chance to read the article by Stephen Hedley; if not, click the reference below to see what he taught his fifth grade class. One of my readers said he passed the article along to his niece, and I think that's a great idea. Our kids are living in a world of fake news, and anything we can do to help them learn to spot it will make them savvier citizens and consumers, but as Mr. Hedley warned, prepare to be fact-checked.



Let's continue with questions three and four:

3. **When was the news story published?**

That seems simple enough but many fake health articles don't have a date. In one article I recently checked, the author published it as though it were her own. The problem was that it just seemed way too familiar. Way at the bottom, it was something she had found on the Internet and reposted. I recognized it from 15 years ago. Dates also apply to research citations. Research should stand the test of time but if an author uses a single study from 20 years ago on a topic such as supplements or a disease, that's a warning they may be picking research to suit the message.

4. **This one's a big deal: what is the author's expertise and background with the subject?**

That's a big problem on the Internet. People lose weight or find a diet that "heals" their irritable bowel disease, they start a blog, and are now "experts." Even if they do seem to have some credentials, are they talking about something within their area of expertise? Do they have the training in statistics and research methods to understand the research they're using? I may be getting beyond what you can do, but you can check someone's education, training, and resume online in places such as Linked-In. Be suspicious if you find nothing there or elsewhere.

One thing: you don't have to do these in the order that I've presented them. Sometimes, it's easier to check the date something was posted or do a quick search on the author. We'll finish it up on Saturday.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: <http://bit.ly/2ozc2kC>

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