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## EXPLORING THE INFORMATION NEEDS AND HABITS OF WOMEN IN THE HEALTH CARE MARKET PLACE

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Research demonstrates that women make 75 percent of all health care decisions and purchases for themselves and their families, yet little is known about the information needs of women in the health care market place. This research sought to review the professional health care and communications literature regarding when, where and how women access and use health care information. Additionally, a small, qualitative pilot study was undertaken to ascertain what health information women want and need, where they look to find such information, how they use that information in the decision-making process and ultimately, how they act on health care information. Analysis of the literature and research determined that women need information regarding health concerns for their own personal well-being (such as reproductive and menopausal concerns, estrogen-related cancers and other issues), and they need information for those for whom they are making health care decisions and purchases, namely their families. As access to the Internet and World Wide Web increases, health care professionals can expect more direct inquiries from consumers regarding health information needs. It is not clearly understood at this point how consumers in general, and women specifically, internalize and act on health information. Lastly, as this research gives both health care professionals and health care writers greater insights into the information needs of women in particular, it will be important to assess the degree to which quality information affects good treatment decisions and health outcomes for consumers.