

Media Report

QUT Press Release and International Coverage for 'Dr Google' doesn't know best – search engine self-diagnosis and 'cyberchondria'

QUT Press release

<https://www.qut.edu.au/news/news?news-id=88455>



Dr Guido Zuccon researched the effectiveness of 'Dr Google.'

'Dr Google' doesn't know best – search engine self-diagnosis and 'cyberchondria'

05 May 2015

QUT research is aiming to improve search engines after finding online self-diagnosis of health conditions provides misleading results that can do more harm than good.

[Dr Guido Zuccon](#), from [QUT's Information Systems School](#), found major search engines were providing irrelevant information that could lead to incorrect self-diagnosis, self-treatment and ultimately possible harm.

Dr Zuccon and colleagues from CSIRO in Brisbane and Vienna University of Technology, Austria, assessed the effectiveness of results from Google and Bing in response to medically-focused searches.

The rush to define ailments online is a significant chunk of internet searches, with [Google reporting one in 20 of its 100 billion searches a month was for health-related information](#). Previous [research](#) found 35 per cent of US adults had gone online to self-diagnose a medical condition.

"People commonly turn to 'Dr Google' to self-diagnose illnesses or ailments," Dr Zuccon said.

"But our results revealed only about three of the first 10 results were highly useful for self-diagnosis and only half of the top 10 were somewhat relevant to the self-diagnosis of the medical condition."

The researchers showed participants medically-accurate images of common conditions like alopecia, jaundice and psoriasis and asked what the participant would search for in an attempt to diagnose it.

For jaundice, for example, queries including "yellow eyes", "eye illness", "white part of the eye turned green" were searched for.

"Because on average only three of the first 10 results were highly useful, people either keep searching or they get the wrong advice which can be potentially harmful for someone's health," Dr Zuccon said.

He warned it was also possible those seeking to self-diagnose online would experience "cyberchondria" - where subsequent searches could escalate concerns.

"If you don't get a clear diagnosis after one search you would likely be tempted to keep searching," Dr Zuccon said.

"So if you had searched for the symptoms of something like a bad head cold, you could end up thinking you had something far more serious, like an issue with the brain.

"This is partly down to searcher bias and partly down to the way the search engines work. For example, pages about brain cancer are more popular than pages about the flu so the user is driven to these results."

Dr Zuccon said search engines performed effectively if the name of the illness was already known.

"They are great for providing a wealth of information about illnesses and diseases, so if you search for something like jaundice you'll have a lot of useful results," he said.

"But our findings suggest it is not the best option for trying to find out what's wrong with you."

Dr Zuccon said further research was needed to identify how to improve search engines to provide searchers with the most effective results.

"We are currently developing methods for search engines to better promote the most useful pages," he said.

"For example, along with colleagues at the CSIRO, we have developed algorithms that return pages that consumers find easier to understand, while maintaining the relevancy and correctness of the medical information presented."

A copy of the published research paper is available on request.

Meltwater News Report

Autodiagnostic : attention aux moteurs de recherche

RTL Info | 17/05/15 22:30

Utiliser les moteurs de recherche comme outil d'auto-diagnostic n'est pas bon pour

*...recherches et ne fera qu'accentuer leurs inquiétudes ' explique le docteur **Guido Zuccon**, professeur en système d'informations. 'Les moteurs de...*

Autodiagnostic : attention aux moteurs de recherche

Topsante.com | 13/05/15 20:30

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Autodiagnostic : attention aux moteurs de recherche

Yahoo! Pour Elles | 13/05/15 18:30

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No intentes diagnosticarte con Google

PrimeraHora.com | 13/05/15 14:30

Esta practica te puede llevar hasta a desarrollar

*...tratar de curar algo que quizás no necesitaba sanar. El doctor **Guido Zuccon**, de la Universidad Tecnológica Queensland, evaluó junto a colegas...*

Do not try to diagnose yourself using Google

The Asian Age | 13/05/15 08:00

Most of us are guilty of turning to Google when we're sick or injured in the hopes of avoiding that dreaded trip to the doctor's office

*...not, users don't get what they're looking for, says engineer **Guido Zuccon** from QUT's Information Systems School. Our results revealed only about...*

Don't Trust Doctor Google

[Discover Magazine Blogs](#) | 13/05/15 01:53

If you've ever waited until no one was nearby, then furtively typed medical symptoms into your browser's search box, you're not alone. Looking for health information was the third most popular online activity in a 2011 Pew report. But how well does it work?

*...good job in answering clearly formulated medical queries, says **Guido Zuccon**, who studies information retrieval at the Queensland University of...*

Cybercondria, perché Google non deve sostituire il tuo medico curante

[Wired.it](#) | 13/05/15 00:58

Probabilmente esistono utenti che navigano in Rete usando la bussola del buon senso.

*...il CSIRO di Brisbane e le University of Vienna, supervisionata da **Guido Zuccon**. Dopo aver chiesto ad alcuni volontari di interrogare Google e...*

Cybercondria, perché Google non deve sostituire il tuo medico curante

[SecoloNuovo](#) | 12/05/15 23:52

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Online Self-diagnosis of Illness can Have Adverse Effects on Your Health

[Medindia.com](#) | 12/05/15 22:17

Search engines provide irrelevant information that might lead to incorrect self-diagnosis, treatment, and apparently people delay consulting with doctors that worsens the condition, says a

*...that makes ill internet users to put their health at risk. Dr **Guido Zuccon**, of the University of Queensland in Australia, said that people commonly...*

Health advice from Internet should be taken with a pinch of salt: Study

[Delhi Daily News](#) | 12/05/15 20:15

Due to easy internet access, we have information about several ailments as well as medical conditions and ways of coping

*...information, thereby putting individuals' health at an increased risk. Dr **Guido Zuccon**, from the University of Queensland, Australia, said that usually*

Study: Health advice on the internet should be taken with a pinch of salt

[TheHealthSite.com](#) | 12/05/15 16:29

It is often said that too much information is bad and with easy access to the internet, we know a lot more about various diseases and conditions and how to tackle

*...for related information that increases the health risk of people. Dr **Guido Zuccon**, of the University of Queensland in Australia, said that people...*

Diagnosing illness online can have adverse effects on your health

The Economic Times- Health World | 12/05/15 04:32

The researchers found that each month half a billion of internet searches are for health-related information that makes ill internet users to put their health at risk, the

*...to put their health at risk, the Daily Express reported. Dr **Guido Zuccon**, of the University of Queensland in Australia, said that people commonly...*

Diagnosing illness online can have adverse effects on your health

Buffalo Breeze | 12/05/15 01:19

A new study has revealed that search engines provide irrelevant information that usually lead to incorrect self-diagnosis and treatment, and apparently people delay visiting doctor that worsens

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Zee News | 12/05/15 00:17

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India4u.com | 12/05/15 00:10

London, May 11 : A new study has revealed that search engines provide irrelevant information that usually lead to incorrect self-diagnosis and treatment, and apparently people delay visiting doctor that worsens

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NewKerala.com | 12/05/15 00:06

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Yahoo! India News | 11/05/15 18:27

London, May 11 (ANI): A new study has revealed that search engines provide irrelevant information that usually lead to incorrect self-diagnosis and treatment, and apparently people delay visiting doctor that worsens
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Why an internet diagnosis might be bad for your health

Express.co.uk | 11/05/15 09:31

Using the internet to diagnose illnesses may do more
*...health at risk. In the first research of its kind, Dr **Guido Zuccon**, of the University of Queensland in Australia, assessed the effectiveness...*

Why an internet diagnosis might be bad for your health

Express (eClips Web) | 11/05/15 07:31

Diagnosing illness online can have adverse effects on your health

Webindia123.com | 11/05/15 05:01

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Net India123 | 11/05/15 05:01

Post Comment Read Comments A new study has revealed that search engines provide irrelevant information that usually lead to incorrect self-diagnosis and treatment, and apparently people delay visiting doctor that worsens
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Diagnosing illness online can have adverse effects on your health

Big News Network.com | 11/05/15 01:41

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Diagnosticile puse în urmă căutărilor pe internet sunt, în mare parte, irelevante

DiaCaf.com | 09/05/15 21:20

Mulți dintre noi apelăm la Google atunci când ne îmbolnăvim în speranța de a evita o vizită la
*însă, cercetătorii nu găsesc răspunsurile de care au nevoie, spune **Guido Zuccon**, unul dintre autorii cercetării. În urma unei analize a rezultatelor...*

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Descopera.ro | 09/05/15 21:13

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Cảnh báo về việc dùng "bác sỹ Google"

Viet Bao Viet Nam | 09/05/15 13:54

Theo một nghiên cứu mới đây của trường Đại học công nghệ Queensland (QUT) thì tự chẩn đoán bệnh bằng công cụ tìm kiếm thường dẫn đến kết quả sai lệch và dẫn đến xấu nhiều hơn
*...Bác sỹ Google thường cho kết quả sai lệch hơn là hữu ích. Tiến sỹ **Guido Zuccon**, là người làm việc cho bộ môn hệ thống thông tin của trường Đại...*

05-05-2015 | 'Dr Google' doesn't know best – search engine self-diagnosis and 'cyberchondria'

Noodls | 09/05/15 07:35

'Dr Google'

*...of health conditions provides misleading results that can do more harm than good. Dr **Guido Zuccon**, from QUT's 'Dr Google' doesn't know best*

Scientists Say Google Is Full of Crap When It Comes to Diagnosing Your Illness

RYOT News | 09/05/15 05:58

These days our go-to doctor is a search engine. Oh, there's a new mole that appeared on your hand, let's ask Google if it's a sign of melanoma.
*...had something far more serious, like an issue with the brain, researcher **Guido Zuccon** told Science Daily. Basically, this meme: This is kind of...*

Don't use Google to diagnose illness, researchers warn

Metro.co.uk | 09/05/15 05:35

It really shouldn't come as any great surprise, but turning to Google in order to self-diagnose illness can leave us much more scared than we necessarily need

*...somewhat relevant to the self-diagnosis of the medical condition, engineer **Guido Zuccon** explained. If you don't get a clear diagnosis after one...*

Cảnh báo về việc dùng "bác sỹ Google"

Tin247.com | 08/05/15 23:49

...

*...dẫn đến kết quả sai lệch và dẫn đến xấu nhiều hơn tốt. Tiến sỹ **Guido Zuccon**, là người làm việc cho bộ môn hệ thống thông tin của trường Đại học...*

Cảnh báo về việc dùng "bác sỹ Google"

Báo Mới | 07/05/15 14:20

NDĐT - Theo một nghiên cứu mới đây của trường Đại học công nghệ Queensland (QUT) thì tự chẩn đoán bệnh bằng công cụ tìm

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The Problem With Self-Diagnosis

Yahoo! New Zealand - Lifestyle | 07/05/15 12:30

Step away from the computer: your distressed attempts to self-diagnose mystery symptoms may not be as helpful

*...time. Queensland University of Technology Information Systems School's **Guido Zuccon** found major search engines were not able to effectively detect...*

Cảnh báo về việc dùng "bác sỹ Google"

Nhandan Newspaper | 07/05/15 08:46

NDĐT - Theo một nghiên cứu mới đây của trường Đại học công nghệ Queensland (QUT) thì tự chẩn đoán bệnh bằng công cụ tìm

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Why Dr Google is not as dangerous as you think

The New Daily | 06/05/15 23:34

Search engines hold a wealth of health knowledge, if only we

*...can clearly name these in your queries, said lead author Dr **Guido Zuccon** of Queensland University of Technology. However, they should be used...*

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Beaudesert Times | 05/05/15 18:06

A study from the Queensland University of Technology has found search engines are very bad at directing people to

*...information when they type in common language descriptions of their conditions. **Guido Zuccon**, from QUT's Information Systems School, tested eight...*

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Magnet | 05/05/15 16:53

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Mandurah Mail | 05/05/15 16:01

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The Macleay Argus | 05/05/15 15:42

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Campbelltown Macarthur Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

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Whyalla News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Cooma-Monaro Express | 05/05/15 15:42

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Wingham Chronicle | 05/05/15 15:42

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Cootamundra Herald | 05/05/15 15:42

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Blue Mountains Gazette | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Observer | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Area News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Crookwell Gazette | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Standard | 05/05/15 15:42

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Bay Post | 05/05/15 15:42

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Blacktown Sun | 05/05/15 15:42

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Walcha News | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Guardian | 05/05/15 15:42

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Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Ararat Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

There is no doctor in your computer able to divine your illness from a vague *...information when they type in common language descriptions of their conditions.* **Guido Zuccon**, from QUT's Information Systems School, tested eight...

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Namoi Valley Independent | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Transcontinental | 05/05/15 15:42

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Hunter Valley News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Camden Haven Courier | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Flinders News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Northern Argus | 05/05/15 15:42

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Cessnock Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Rural | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Examiner | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Border Mail | 05/05/15 15:42

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Merredin Wheatbelt Mercury | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Courier | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Advocate - Hepburn | 05/05/15 15:42

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Illawarra Mercury | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Star | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Recorder | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Northern Daily Leader | 05/05/15 15:42

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The North West Star | 05/05/15 15:42

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Port Macquarie News | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Irrigator | 05/05/15 15:42

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Barossa Herald | 05/05/15 15:42

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Newcastle Herald | 05/05/15 15:42

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Central Midland & Coastal Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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Great Lakes Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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Goondiwindi Argus | 05/05/15 15:42

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Gloucester Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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Forbes Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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Canowindra News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Latrobe Valley Express | 05/05/15 15:42

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Inverell Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Naracoorte Herald | 05/05/15 15:42

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Penrith City Gazette | 05/05/15 15:42

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Oberon Review | 05/05/15 15:42

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Summit Sun | 05/05/15 15:42

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Coastal Leader | 05/05/15 15:42

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Bunbury Mail | 05/05/15 15:42

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Murray Mail | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Daily Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

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Eyre Peninsula Tribune | 05/05/15 15:42

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Goulburn Post | 05/05/15 15:42

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Daily Liberal | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Ridge News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Mudgee Guardian | 05/05/15 15:42

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Nyngan Observer | 05/05/15 15:42

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Busselton-Dunsborough Mail | 05/05/15 15:42

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Border Chronicle | 05/05/15 15:42

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Braidwood Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Glen Innes Examiner | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Wagin Argus | 05/05/15 15:42

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Milton Ulladulla Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Moree Champion | 05/05/15 15:42

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Port Stephens Examiner | 05/05/15 15:42

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Grenfell Record | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Guyra Argus | 05/05/15 15:42

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Sunraysia Daily | 05/05/15 15:42

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Jimboomba Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Lithgow Mercury | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Times - On The Coast | 05/05/15 15:42

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Eastern Riverina Chronicle | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Islander | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Murray Valley Standard | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Moyne Gazette | 05/05/15 15:42

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Harden Murrumburrah Express | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Queanbeyan Age | 05/05/15 15:42

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Muswellbrook Chronicle | 05/05/15 15:42

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Hawkesbury Gazette | 05/05/15 15:42

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Tenterfield Star | 05/05/15 15:42

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Parramatta Sun | 05/05/15 15:42

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Guardian News | 05/05/15 15:42

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St George & Sutherland Shire Leader | 05/05/15 15:42

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Camden-Narellan Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease There is no doctor in your computer able to divine your

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Manning River Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Fairfield City Champion | 05/05/15 15:42

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Midland Express | 05/05/15 15:42

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Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Town & Country Magazine | 05/05/15 15:42

There is no doctor in your computer able to divine your illness from a vague *...information when they type in common language descriptions of their conditions.* **Guido Zuccon**, from QUT's Information Systems School, tested eight...

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Roxby Downs Sun | 05/05/15 15:42

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Central Western Daily | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Scone Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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Bendigo Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

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Wauchope Gazette | 05/05/15 15:42

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Lakes Mail | 05/05/15 15:42

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South West Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

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Southern Weekly | 05/05/15 15:42

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Blayney Chronicle | 05/05/15 15:42

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Wellington Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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St Marys-Mt Druitt Star | 05/05/15 15:42

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Redland City Bulletin | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Singleton Argus | 05/05/15 15:42

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Liverpool City Champion | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Maitland Mercury | 05/05/15 15:42

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Bellingen Shire Courier-Sun | 05/05/15 15:42

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Katherine Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Boorowa News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Bombala Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Western Magazine | 05/05/15 15:42

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West Coast Sentinel | 05/05/15 15:42

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Cowra Guardian | 05/05/15 15:42

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Southern Highland News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Stawell Times-News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Merimbula News Weekly | 05/05/15 15:42

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Yass Tribune | 05/05/15 15:42

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Rouse Hill News | 05/05/15 15:42

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Parkes Champion-Post | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Wimmera Mail-Times | 05/05/15 15:42

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Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

The Young Witness | 05/05/15 15:42

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Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

Wollondilly Advertiser | 05/05/15 15:42

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Southern Cross | 05/05/15 15:42

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Collie Mail | 05/05/15 15:42

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Bega District News | 05/05/15 15:42

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease There is no doctor in your computer able to divine your

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Western Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Riverina Leader | 05/05/15 15:42

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The Avon Valley Advocate | 05/05/15 15:42

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Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

South Coast Register | 05/05/15 15:42

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Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease

The Armidale Express | 05/05/15 15:42

Dr Google: Why googling symptoms doesn't diagnose your disease There is no doctor in your computer able to divine your
...information when they type in common language descriptions of their conditions. Guido Zuccon, from QUT's Information Systems School, tested eight...

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The Esperance Express | 05/05/15 13:42

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Donnybrook-Bridgetown Mail | 05/05/15 13:42

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Augusta Margaret River Mail | 05/05/15 13:42

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Dr Google makes you cyber-sick

Courier Mail (Epaper) | 05/05/15 10:23

USING "Dr Google" to selfdiagnose a health problem won't work in most cases, with symptom-based web searches leading
...by the Queensland University of Technology Information Systems School s Guido Zuccon found major search engines were not able to effectively...

Self-diagnosis of health problems via Google has hidden dangers

News.com.au | 05/05/15 00:30

USING "Dr Google" to self--diagnose a health problem won't work in most cases, with symptom-based web searches leading
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effectively...

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Perth Now | 05/05/15 00:30

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Self-diagnosis of health problems via Google has hidden dangers

Herald Sun - News | 05/05/15 00:30

A spike in the number of flu cases has prompted an urgent reminder to get vaccinated TEN 28 Apr 2015 News USING “Dr
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The Daily Telegraph | 05/05/15 00:30

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The Courier-Mail | 05/05/15 00:01

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...research by Queensland University of Technology Information Systems School s **Guido Zuccon** found major search engines were not able to effectively...

Additional International Media Coverage (including social media)

(Note that some of the following links may have been already mentioned above)

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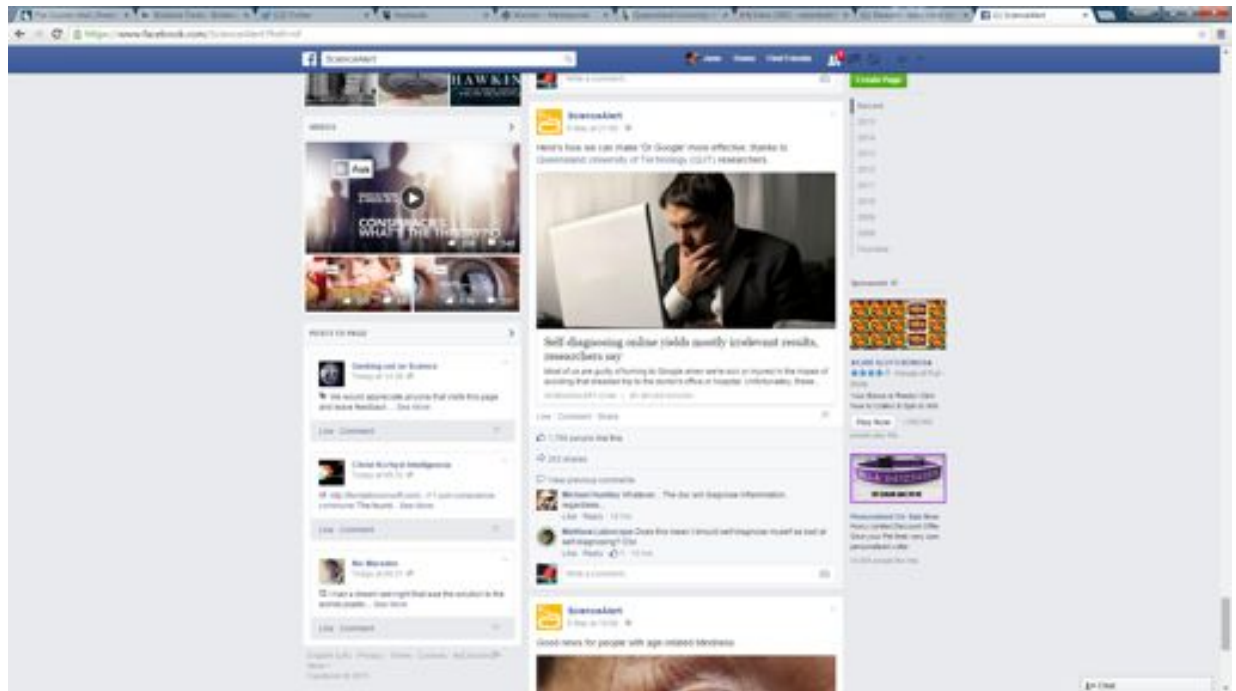
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