



# Quality Evaluation of Health Answers in Social Q&A: Socio-Emotional Support and Evaluation Criteria

Adam Worrall, Sanghee Oh, and Yong Jeong Yi  
College of Communication and Information, Florida State University



## Introduction

- Little is known about the quality of health information in community contexts and socio-emotional factors impacting its evaluation
- We explored the socio-emotional reactions of and evaluation criteria discussed by evaluators of the quality of health answers in Yahoo! Answers, a social Q&A site

*What socio-emotional reactions do librarians, nurses, and users have to evaluating health answers from social Q&A sites?*  
*How does socio-emotional support relate to the evaluation criteria and indicators used by librarians, nurses, and users in such evaluation?*

## Key Findings

- Social and emotional support are important criteria on social Q&A sites
- Users focused on social and emotional support; librarians and nurses believed in need for objectivity, completeness
- Nurses also concerned with accuracy
- Trust / mistrust felt most by nurses and librarians, less by users



### Fear or concern

"People really think they are getting reliable health information this way?? YIKES!" (L22)

### Emotions

#### Trust

Take "with a grain of salt" (N12)

Qualitative analysis using open coding approach

### Evaluation Criteria and Indicators

Confidence	Surprise	Sources	Subjectivity	Style	Completeness	Accuracy
Site "has helped me greatly over the years" (U25)	"that people really turn to ... [and] trust" other Internet users (N14)	"most were individual's opinions" (N11) Personal experience "a source in itself" (U12)	"heavily opinionated" (N01) "no credentials other than [their] experiences" (L14)	"not very scientific" (U02) "more like friends responding to email than... useful information" (L09) "informative" (U14)	"most people were trying to be helpful ... [but] few put in a lot of effort" (L18) "very slack, lazy, and not helpful" (N37)	"only one gave the most accurate answer" (N14) "not always the necessary ingredient" (L24)
Empathy						
Users "inherently want to help people" (L11)						

## Conclusions

- Social Q&A sites must balance providing objective information and offering socio-emotional support to users in a comfortable context
- Users must also be educated in balanced quality evaluation of health information, incorporating subjective and objective evaluation criteria
- We will explore perceptions, advice, design implications, and the potential of balanced, collaborative educational efforts and information services