

# The Truth About

# ON-LINE HEALTH



Riding the wave of popularity in the technology age, people have naturally turned to on-line solutions for their health needs

- Internet use increased **189%** from 2000 to 2005<sup>3</sup>.
- It's predicted that **80%** of internet users have searched online for health information<sup>3</sup>.

The low-cost distribution of on-line health programs are a significant advantage to the companies providing them. In addition, on-line health programs offer the user the following distinct benefits:

# 1

## **Timely**

On-line health information can be accessed immediately, at the users convenience.

# 2

## **Trusted**

Many on-line training programs have been developed by fully qualified professionals, using trusted scientific data.

# 3

## **Tailored**

On-Line Health programs can utilize feedback forms to provide sound programs based on the special health considerations, and goals of the client.



**"With all the benefits of on-line health programs, why are they notorious for high drop off rates?"**

## **Accountability is the Missing Element**

Although on-line health programs have good success in the beginning, they fail when it comes to creating lasting change. On-line health programs are inherently passive. They are great to provide information when needed, but lack the traction to keep the user committed.

**"All the knowledge in the world is not enough to create change if one is not motivated."**

~ DR. MICHAEL O'DONNELL<sup>4</sup>



People get involved because they want convenience, but tend to drop out because they lack motivation. In order to be maximally effective, On-line programs must be combined with other tools, such as:

**Personal Coaching Programs:** Research shows that compared to internet-based programs, personal contact has significantly more adherence<sup>3</sup>. Whether the personal contact be in the form of periodic meetings, or phone call conversations, on-line health programs have shown great promise as an adjunct to personal health coaching programs. The coach can create the personal touch, motivate the client, and hold them accountable to their commitment. A personal coach can also provide solutions to any obstacles or setbacks experienced with an on-line health program.

**Incentive Programs:** Incentives must be significant in order to motivate people enough to adhere to an on-line program.

In the American Journal of Health Promotion, Dr. Michael O'Donnell suggests that financial rewards would likely need to be in the ballpark of at least \$300 to \$1000 in order to be effective. As an alternative idea, Dr. O'Donnell suggests the possibility of increasing the medical insurance premium for all employees, and waiving the increase for those participating in the health promotion program<sup>4</sup>.



**"If money were a sufficient motivator, nobody would smoke"**

**Dr. Michael O'Donnell<sup>4</sup>**

## Conclusion

As with any new technology, on-line health is a work in progress. Evidence has shown that its best role is its effectiveness as a support for other health tools, rather than a primary motivator. They are great for providing timely information, which can be used to help weight the advantages and disadvantages of making a change, or be used to build evidence for a plan to create change.

On-line programs tell you **WHAT** to do.

A personal coach can provide real life solutions by telling you **HOW** to do it based on your unique situation.



As Larry Chapman has said in his closing thoughts,

**"eHealth promotion provides a flexible, adaptable, and low-cost distribution channel for information and behavioral support, but it will still need to be carefully integrated with other complementary interventions to be a maximally effective tool for health behavior change."**<sup>2</sup>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brendan J. Fox is a Kinesiologist working out of the Medcan Clinic in downtown Toronto ([www.Medcan.com](http://www.Medcan.com)). He has amassed 14 certifications in the area of fitness, nutrition, and therapy. He specializes in personal exercise coaching in the areas of weight loss, pain relief, and special health challenges. In addition, Brendan regularly lectures to large groups on topics related to health and wellness. He has developed a strong reputation as a leader in the field, and was even invited to participate on the Health Care Team for Canada at the 2006 Olympics. For more information on Brendan, visit his personal website [www.Foxfitness.ca](http://www.Foxfitness.ca)

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