

Read the article "Confessions of a cyberchondriac" and complete the paragraphs with topic sentences A-E:

- A Another problem for cyberchondriacs is that online medical information may be from an unreliable source or be out of date.
- B Sadly, the problem with Dr Google is that he isn't exactly a comfort in times of crisis.
- C The Microsoft study also revealed another serious problem – that online information often doesn't discriminate between common and very rare conditions.
- D Unfortunately, once you have it cyberchondria can be hard to cure.
- E Four hours later I got a diagnosis.

CONFESIONS OF A CYBERCHONDRIAC

A few weeks ago I was feeling **under the weather**. After days of intensive internet diagnosis, I finally went to see my GP. After examining me she told me that my **heart rate** was a bit fast and sent me off to A&E to have some tests. Did I go straight there? Of course not. First I took out my phone, logged on to Google, and found out that the technical term for a fast heart rate is supraventricular tachycardia. Then I typed these two words into Google.

1

For example, wrongdiagnosis.com immediately scared me with a list of 407 possible causes. I raced to the hospital, convinced that I probably needed open-heart **surgery**.

2

I had a chest **infection** ... and a bad case of cyberchondria. The only consolation for the latter condition is that I'm in good company. A Microsoft survey of one million internet users last year found that 2% of all searches were health-related.

3

Since my trip to hospital, I have been obsessively checking my **pulse**, swapping symptoms in chatrooms, and reading all about worst-case scenarios. What if the doctors got it wrong? What if the ECG machine was faulty? It's exhausting trying to convince yourself that you might have a **life-threatening** illness.

4

One in four of all articles thrown up by an internet search for 'headache' suggested a brain **tumour** as a possible cause. Although it is true that this may be the cause, in fact brain tumours develop in fewer than one in 50,000 people. People also assume that the first answers that come up in searches refer to the

most common causes, so if you type in 'mouth ulcer' and see that 'mouth cancer' has several mentions near the top, you think that it must be very common. However, this is not the case at all.

5

A recent American study showed that 75% of the people who use the internet to look up information about their health do not check where that information came from, or the date it was created. 'Once something has been put up on the internet, even if it's wrong, it's difficult to remove,' says Sarah Jarvis, a doctor. 'This is a problem especially with scare stories, and also with some **alternative remedies** which claim to be **miracle cures**, but which may actually do you harm.' Check the information? Sorry, I don't have time - I'm off to buy a heartrate monitor!

Match the highlighted words and phrases with their definitions:

_____ (adj) sth very serious, which could kill you

_____ (noun) a small blister in the mouth that can be very painful, but is not serious

_____ (noun) ways of curing illnesses that are not traditional medicine, e.g. herbal medicine

_____ not feeling very well

_____ (noun) a serious illness in which malignant cells form in the body and kill normal body cells

_____ (noun) an illness that is caused by bacteria or a virus

_____ (noun) the speed at which your heart beats

_____ (noun) the medical treatment of an illness or injury that involves an operation

_____ (noun) the number of times your heart beats in a minute

_____ (noun) a group of cells that are growing in a place where they should not be

_____ (noun) successful treatments for illnesses that were thought to be impossible to cure

Listen to a radio interview with a doctor about cyberchondria. What's her general opinion of patients using health websites?



Listen again. Then answer the questions:

1 What did a patient she saw recently think he had?

2 What did he really have?

3 What four things does she say that diagnosis depends on apart from symptoms?

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

3 What kind of website forums does she recommend?

4 Complete the three tips she gives to cyberchondriacs:

- a) Only look online
- b) Make sure that the website you are using is
- c) Remember that common symptoms usually