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**CONOSCERE E USARE  
GOOGLE**  
**Percorsi e scorciatoie per  
trovare ciò che cerchiamo.**

Luca De Fiore. Roma:  
Il Pensiero Scientifico Editore;  
2008. 103 p.  
ISBN 978-88-490-0232-4.  
€ 12,00.

The amazing success and the bewildering increase in the number of Google users can no longer be ignored, nor is the fact that Google is *de facto* the world's largest search engine with more than a hundred interfaces and a billion users around the world. Sixteen thousand people are currently working in the company scattered in forty locations worldwide, as reported in the Introduction to *Conoscere e usare Google* (How to know and make good use of Google) by Luca De Fiore (director of the Il Pensiero Scientifico Editore).

The *New England Journal of Medicine* has recently reported that 60% of all the clinicians who end up by reading a science article online, find this article through Google. Therefore, unexpectedly, the scientific community *does* make use of this popular search engine, though it could easily access more prestigious and specialised databases and portals.

However, how many users know exactly how to take advantage of Google's available options, how to refine the search, and succeed, for instance, in finding the full text of an article retrieved, but not available, on PubMed?

Guided by two young clinicians who search Google to obtain information on guidelines on clinical practice for hypertension and myocardial infarction, we discover that Google offers a series of useful search options. Even if it does not consent the use of Boolean operators, it allows the refining of a search through the use of other symbols in the construction of the query: the mathematical symbol "-"; the tilde (so called fuzzy operator "~"); the asterisk (wildcard character); the quotation marks, and so on. It also offers options like "Search within results", "Refine results", "Advanced search" and "Preferences".

The manual is enhanced by a number of boxes which give a clear and concise explanation on topics and issues that everyone should be more aware of: how to help the search engine find and list your site (META tags); how does Google work (use of the algorithm PageRank™); Google or PubMed?; Google Scholar and PubMed; Google and the Infodemiology (contraction of Information and Epidemiology); and many others.

And why not acquiring some more general notions to make a better use of this search engine that we commonly use not only to retrieve information pertaining to our working environment? We would discover, among others, the extremely useful "Define:" option which permits to find definitions of the searched term and links to different sites; or the options "Map, Satellite, Terrain and Search businesses" in Google Maps; or the potentialities of Google Earth which could be extremely useful for environmental studies; and also, Google Book Search, Google Image Search, Google Blog Search and so on.

The last chapter of *Conoscere e usare Google* is understandably titled "From data to wisdom" and highlights the author's concerns and apprehension that the habit of the so called *micro-chunking* (reduce content to its simplest form) would be dangerously applied to the searches of health information and that queries of vital importance, such as the dosage of a certain drug, would be obtained through a quick, superficial and fragmented use of a non specialised and authoritative search engine. The use of traditional medical books or the counselling with specialist doctors are still to be considered valid alternatives to the Web. "To separate the wheat from the chaff could be very costly for clinicians, in terms of time, and for the patient, in terms of his very own health".

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