

mayoclinic.org

A health information site run by the world-renowned Mayo Clinic, with medical content that is reviewed by physicians. It publishes highly reliable content, although its transparency standards are weak.

Ownership and Financing	<p>The site is owned by the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, a nonprofit organization that handles the educational and research materials published by the Mayo Clinic. The Mayo Clinic encompasses hospital campuses in Rochester, Minnesota., Phoenix, Arizona., and Jacksonville, Florida, along with a network of physician practices and specialists in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. The site carries advertisements and sponsored content. It also solicits donations.</p>
Content	<p>MayoClinic.org provides alphabetized articles on health conditions, diseases, medications, and medical procedures designed for a general audience. Articles are often spread out over multiple pages. For example, the article on brain tumors has separate pages for symptoms and causes of the disease, diagnosis, and treatment, Mayo Clinic doctors and departments specializing in brain tumors, and an overview of brain tumor care at Mayo Clinic.</p> <p>What part of the article readers see first depends on how they access the site. If clicking a link to an article through the alphabetized lists, an overview of the subject will pop up first. If readers select a topic from the Featured Topics section of the home page, the first page they see is the one promoting Mayo Clinic's expertise and skill in that particular area.</p> <p>Along with the articles, MayoClinic.org provides information about its hospitals, medical schools, laboratories, and clinical trials.</p>
Credibility	<p>Mayo spokesperson Susan Barber Lindquist told NewsGuard that the site's goal is "providing accurate, reliable and timely information to both the medical community and the general public."</p> <p>According to MayoClinic.org's content development policy, those responsible for writing articles for the site have "academic training in journalism, creative writing, health education or related fields." The site's medical editors, who include Mayo Clinic physicians, registered nurses, dietitians and other specialists, then review the content.</p> <p>Lindquist told NewsGuard that MayoClinic.org articles draw from a variety of sources, including federal health agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, guidelines developed by groups such as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, and the Mayo Clinic's own experts. The site's terms and conditions include a disclaimer saying none of its content should be considered a substitute for medical advice and treatment.</p> <p>In 2018, the credibility of health information on the site was called into question by a 2018 ProPublica article. The story found MayoClinic.org, along with sites including Harvard Health Publishing and MedlinePlus, had incorrect information about preeclampsia, a potentially fatal complication of pregnancy. ProPublica reported Mayo and other sites wrote that the only cure for the condition is "delivery of your baby." The Mayo article did not mention that preeclampsia can also develop in the days and weeks after childbirth.</p> <p>MayoClinic.org updated the article to explain the possibility of postpartum preeclampsia and added that black women having a higher risk of developing the condition. Mayo told ProPublica it had "self-identified" the need to update the article, although the change came after ProPublica reached out for comment.</p> <p>Lindquist told NewsGuard that articles are reviewed every two years, but can be changed more frequently because of "critical developments," such as a drug being pulled off the market, or when errors are discovered by Mayo or readers. In the case of the preeclampsia article, Lindquist said the update was to "add clarifying context, not to correct a statement of fact."</p> <p>MayoClinic.org has a corrections policy listed on the site, stating that if "we determine that our content contains confusing, misleading or inaccurate information, we will revise the content." Lindquist said that corrections are included in an article if a factual error has been made, not when they have been updated -- as was the case with the preeclampsia article. NewsGuard could find no examples of corrections on the site and Mayo provided no examples of corrections when asked. Thus, NewsGuard has determined the site does not regularly correct or clarify errors.</p> <p>MayoClinic.org won the Harris Poll's Health Information Website of the Year in 2013 and 2015. Mayo Clinic's flagship hospital in Rochester, Minnesota is considered one of the best health care facilities in the U.S., having topped the U.S. News and World Report Best Hospitals Honor Roll for 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19.</p>
Transparency	<p>Articles about diseases and conditions on the site are credited to Mayo Clinic Staff, not individual authors. Medical editors make the final calls on issues of medical accuracy, Lindquist said, but no one is given individual credit on an article because of how many people contribute. Lindquist confirmed to NewsGuard that the "communications professionals" writing the articles are not individually identified.</p> <p>The site's advertising policy is also more detailed and readily available than most news sites. Among its many conditions, Mayo Clinic says advertisers cannot make unsubstantiated health claims or suggest Mayo is endorsing their product. If the ads are for over-the-counter or prescription medications, they must have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Advertisements seen along the right side of pages on the site include the following disclaimer: "Mayo Clinic does not endorse companies or products. Advertising revenue supports our not-for-profit mission." (Although the Mayo Clinic's tax status is that of a nonprofit, it consistently reports hundreds of millions of dollars in annual operating profit.)</p> <p>Much of the information in the "Drugs and Supplements" section of MayoClinic.org is</p>



This website mostly adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency.



Does not repeatedly publish false content



Gathers and presents information responsibly



Regularly corrects or clarifies errors



Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly



Avoids deceptive headlines



Website discloses ownership and financing



Clearly labels advertising



Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest



The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information

Criteria are listed in order of importance.
[More information.](#)

listed as provided by Micromedex, a drug, disease, and toxicology database run by the IBM Corporation's Truven Health Analytics and used by Mayo Clinic and other health systems. Its use on the site comes with an additional disclaimer, saying Mayo and Micromedex make "no representation or warranty as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, usefulness or completeness of any of the information contained in the products."

The site's ownership by the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research is disclosed in the copyright at the bottom of every page. Its affiliation with Mayo Clinic is made clear on the About This Site page.

When Mayoclinic.org medical editors have done work for drug or medical device companies, the potential conflict of interest is not disclosed on the site. For example, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Open Payments database lists hematology editor Dr. Ruben Mesa as performing more than \$160,000 worth of editorial, medical writing, and consulting services between 2013 and 2017 related to Jakafi, a treatment for bone marrow disorder myelofibrosis. Mesa's work is not disclosed on the Mayoclinic.org entry on Jakafi. An attached comment on the payments says "no payments were made directly" to Mesa.

Lindquist said Mayo Clinic's internal records "do not indicate any personal payment to Dr. Mesa for promotional speaking," which she added would not be allowed under Mayo's consulting policy. Mesa's consulting payments, she said, were directed to Mayo rather than accepted personally.

"Data listed within Open Payments may be inaccurate as industry often still lists the individual's name as receiving payment," Lindquist told NewsGuard.

In another example, urology editor Dr. Erik Castle is listed in ProPublica's database of doctor payments as accepting \$9,500 in consulting fees from Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals in 2015 related to the prostate cancer drug Xofigo. No disclosure of this payment is included on the Xofigo article on Mayoclinic.org, and the drug is listed among potential treatments for men with stage 4 prostate cancer.

Nineteen of Mayoclinic.org's medical editors are listed as having accepted payments from pharmaceutical or medical device companies between 2013 and 2017. Lindquist said Mayo's policy requires disclosure of any financial interest in products mentioned in their articles, but no example of such a disclosure was provided.

NewsGuard has therefore determined Mayoclinic.org fails to meet the standards of providing information about site leaders and possible conflicts of interests.

History

The site's domain name was registered in 1997. The Mayo Clinic was founded in 1889 in Rochester, Minnesota, as Saint Mary's Hospital. The Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research was established in 1915 to create a more rigorous training program for medical specialists in partnership with the University of Minnesota.

Written by: [John Gregory](#)

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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Credibility

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Transparency

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History

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