

# ACCESS AND QUALITY OF ONLINE MEDICINES INFORMATION

Gabriel L. Galea, Lilian M. Azzopardi

Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

email: gabriel.galea.16@um.edu.mt, lilian.m.azzopardi@um.edu.mt

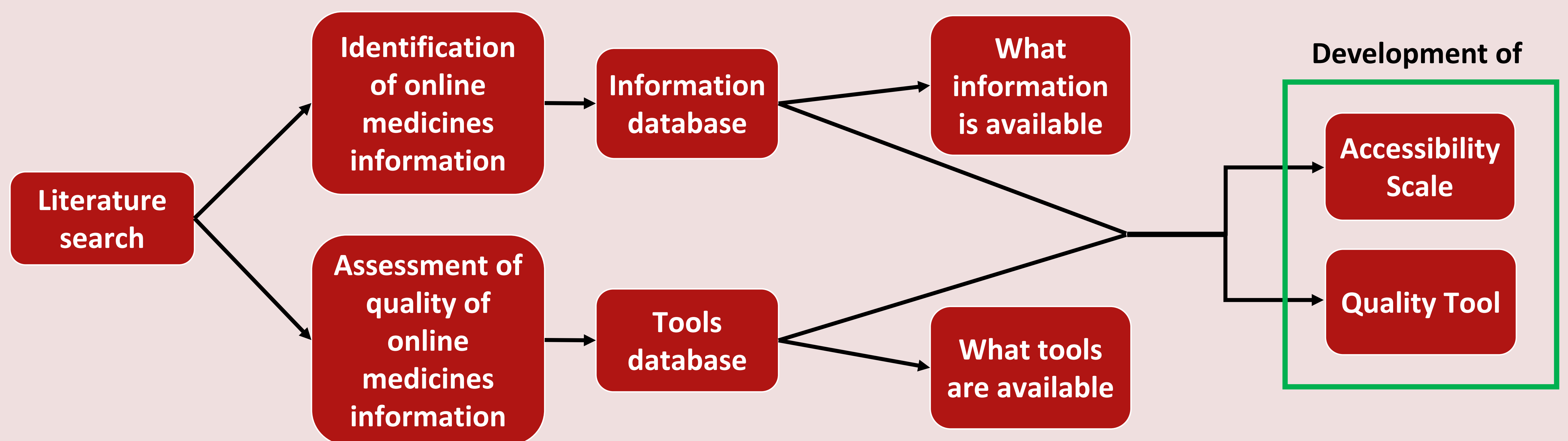
## INTRODUCTION

With the expansion of the Internet over the years, its uses related to health have greatly increased. Among the most notable of these uses is the searching for health information. Features which promote the Internet for this use include its accessibility, interactivity, social support and anonymity. A major disadvantage of the Internet is the lack of standardised quality systems for online health-related information. This deficiency prompts concerns regarding accuracy, reliability and genuineness of information provided by online sources.<sup>1</sup>

## AIMS

- To determine what online medicines information is available for professionals and the general public
- To determine what tools are available to assess the quality of online medicines information
- To establish a quality system for online medicines information

## METHOD



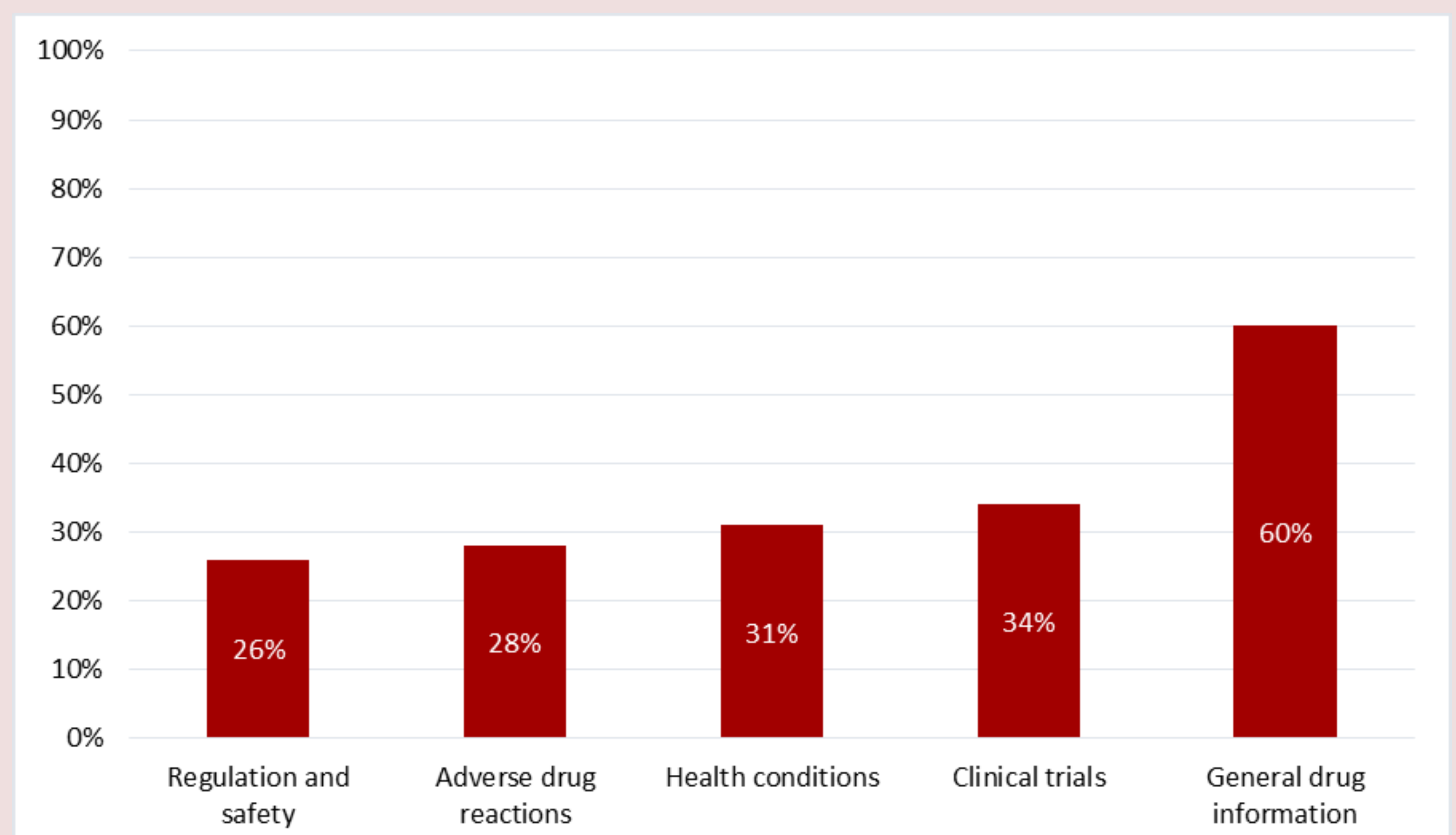
## RESULTS

The literature search yielded 65 online medicines information sources: 39 sources provided general drug information and 22 provided clinical trial information; 38 sources were addressed to healthcare professionals and 28 were directed to the public.

Twenty-six tools were identified, in which the most prominent criteria for assessing quality were timeliness of information and the source of information.

The developed validated quality system consists of two tools: 1) the Quality Tool which evaluates category of information, intended audience and 7 assessment criteria including sources and authorship; 2) the Accessibility Scale consisting of four sections: economy, audience, mobile-friendliness and time relevance.

Categories of information supplied by online sources (N = 65)



## CONCLUSION

This study has contributed to the development of a quality system for online health-related information, through the design of two tools: 1) a quality tool which evaluates category of information, intended audience, structure, source, access and seven assessment criteria: contact information, links, purpose, authorship, sponsorship, source of information and timeliness of information; 2) an accessibility scale consisting of four sections: economy, audience, mobile-friendliness and time relevance. The developed quality system may be adopted to assess the accessibility and quality of online medicines information platforms.

## REFERENCE

1. Cline R, Haynes K. Consumer health information seeking on the Internet: the state of the art. Health Education Research. 2001; 16(6):671-692.