

'Website of the Year' Oxford charity targeted by hackers

26/11/2014

Oxford-based charity website healthtalk.org was maliciously hacked on Sunday just days after winning the Good Web Guide's charity Website of the Year award.

Shortlisted alongside the RSPCA, the website won the charity category of the awards which are an annual celebration of online excellence. The award was collected by the charity's Chief Executive, Luís Carrasqueiro, at a ceremony at the Royal Institution of Great Britain. But less than a week after celebrating the website accolade, the healthtalk.org team were shocked to find that a pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel hacker collective had taken over the website.

"It was very hard to believe and inexplicable" say Luís "we can't understand why we would be targeted. The website supports thousands of people every day so obviously our first priority was to get the site back up quickly"

healthtalk.org (formerly healthtalkonline) partners with the University of Oxford to provide information on a range of health conditions and other health-related issues through patients' real life experiences shared on video, audio and in text format.

The website is now back online but the team were worried when it transpired that the entire website, first launched in 2001 by the late Oxford GP Ann McPherson, had been completely deleted. "In 13 years we've covered almost 90 health conditions, collected more than 3,000 patient stories and 25,000 videos of those interviews. We take regular back-ups but we're adding new content all the time and weren't sure how much of it we would lose." Luís explains "With just 3 staff it could have been a nightmare but luckily we had a viable back up from a few days before the hack took place"

The website reaches audiences of 2.3 million people per year and the patient videos are regularly used in training health professionals. "We're relieved that the website is back online reaching those who need it and we're thrilled that the website has been recognised by the Good Web Guide both for its technical quality and the invaluable support it provides."

About healthtalk.org

healthtalk.org was co-founded by Dr Andrew Herxheimer breast cancer sufferer Ann McPherson, from a steering group who met in North Oxford around Ann's kitchen table in 2001. Though a GP herself, Ann wanted more than the medical facts about her condition. "I realised that I wanted to know how other people had managed with breast cancer" Ann explained in 2010 "I didn't just want to hear the stories of people who had ridden across France and "battled" with their cancer, but just the ordinary people". Sadly Ann passed away in 2011 from pancreatic cancer but the website continues to grow.

Thousands of people have now shared their experiences in video interviews with University of Oxford researchers, to help others in the same situation understand what to expect from health issues such as [breast cancer](#), [depression](#), [menopause](#) or [cervical abnormalities](#). Within each health issue covered on the site, you can find out about the full range of experiences from finding out that something was wrong and making treatment decision to changes in family life and work.

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