APPENDIX

Draft Guidelines for Web-based Surveys

Scenarios that may be suitable for a Web-based survey:

Respondent features:

- Respondents are already avid Internet users; e-mail addresses known for reminder messages.
- Respondents are enthusiastic form fillers, will not require monetary incentives.
- Need for respondents covering a wide geographic area (e.g., rare clinical specialties, diseases)
- Respondents known to match nonrespondents and even non-Internet users on key variables.

Survey features:

- Need for complex branching, interactive questionnaire, or multimedia as part of the survey instrument.
- Survey content will evolve fast (e.g., Delphi surveys).
- Intent is to document bizarre, rare phenomena whose simple occurrence is of interest.
- No need for representative results: collecting ideas vs. hypothesis testing.

Investigator features:

- Limited budget for mailing and data processing but good in-house Web skills.
- Precautions can be taken against multiple responses by same individual, password sharing.
- Web survey forms have been piloted with representative participants and demonstrate acceptable validity and reliability with most platform/browser/ISP combinations.
- Data are required fast in a readily analyzed form.

Scenarios unsuitable for a Web-based survey:

Respondent features:

- Target group is under-represented on Internet, e.g., underprivileged or elderly people.
- Target group is concerned, however unreasonably, about privacy aspects.
- Target group requires substantial incentives to complete the survey.
- Need for a representative sample.

Survey features:

- Need for accurate timing or observational data on participants.
- An existing paper instrument has been carefully validated on target group.
- Need to capture qualitative data or observations about participants.
- Need to capture accurate timings (unless Java applets used).
- Wish to reach the same group of participants in the same way months or years later.

Investigator features:

- Limited in-house Web or Java expertise, but existing desk top publishing and mailing facility.

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ERRATUM

Error in Wording

On p. 159 of the Mar/Apr issue of *JAMIA*,[1] in the last line of the hypothetic Dxtractor query sequence in the left-hand column, the word OR should replace the word AND, so that the full line reads:

    Set 8: Boolean: 6 OR 7; 342 patients

1. Nigrin DJ, Kohane IS. Temporal Expressiveness in Querying a Time-stamp-based Clinical Database. J Am Med Inform Assoc. 2000;7(2):152–63.