

### **Abstract**

People often explore the cyber space to acquire knowledge in this era. This mode of learning has become increasingly popular to gain health information, as the population is more health conscious than ever. Further, a drastic change in the diseases patterns and the emergence of new threats to the global health, necessitate the use of a media that convey information faster, effectively and economically. Online information inherits all of these qualities, thus becoming the preferred media of disseminating health information.

Although it is the better way of conveying health information to the public, Sri Lanka is yet to tap into this resource, while other developed countries have succeeded in doing so. It is observed across the world that impact of a website delivering health information is significant on the public. Therefore, a mechanism to regularize such web sites is vital. Policies and guidelines that specifically address the standardization of health web sites are scarce, even at the global context.

With the initiative of using ICT in government institutions in providing services, health care organizations are also stepping into this trend of service delivery. Therefore, it is a timely necessity to formulate a policy and guidelines on web sites delivering health information. With this purview, this project was carried out to assist in formulating guidelines on online information.

Analysis of existing eHealth policies and other available guidelines was performed to identify the important aspects that have to be addressed. In addition, a survey was carried out in selected government health institutions in order to assess the feasibility of implementing an eHealth Policy.

Two important aspects, web standards and information provision, were identified that have to be addressed in a policy for health web sites. Guidelines on web sites providing health information are surprisingly few. Fortunately, guidelines which apply to web standards and information provision in general are available, hence these can be customized to suit the health sector. A mechanism to accredit web sites that provide health information should be established to ensure a continuous supervision on such web sites.