

Heuristic Evaluation for Blue Cross Blue Shield Website

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Executive Summary

Using Nielsen's 10 heuristics, I conducted a heuristic evaluation/analysis on the BCBS desktop site. The website's intended use is to find and purchase insurance, in network doctors, and information about the company. Because I did not know all the prefixes for all the various plans, I was only able to test site functionality within the scope of my own.

In general, the site does follow a minimalist aesthetic, but did not follow a minimalist structure. Most of the issues are low to moderate, but there are enough of them that I found to make for a fairly poor user experience, and should still be fixed. Starting at the homepage, the menu system is a bit much to navigate, with menu options repeating themselves in multiple locations, and way too many pathways to take. The site also seems to be hub for an entire family of similar sites that are region specific, meaning the user could be sent off to a number of other sites without a clear path back to where they came from. There is no universal experience.

Perhaps the biggest problem, and the most severe, is the search functionality when looking for an in network doctor. There is no directory based on your location, despite the site knowing exactly where you are and what your plan is. To search for a doctor, you have to already know some names to search for, which defeats the entire purpose of using the site to find a new doctor.

I will go into more detail regarding specific findings below.

Explanation of Findings Table

Heuristic: Nielsen's 10 heuristics, http://www.useit.com/papers/heuristic/heuristic_list.html

Visibility of system status

The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

Match between system and the real world

The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

User control and freedom

Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.

Consistency and standards

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.

Error prevention

Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

Recognition rather than recall

Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

Flexibility and efficiency of use

Accelerators -- unseen by the novice user -- may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

Aesthetic and minimalist design

Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

Help and documentation

Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.

Feedback/Issue: Explain the reasons why the interface violates or upholds this heuristic. Be sure to be clear about *where* in the screen you are referencing.

Screen/Scope: Describe the scope of the feedback or the problem; include whether the scope of the issue is throughout the product or within a specific screen or screens. If the problems are specific to a page, include the appropriate page numbers.

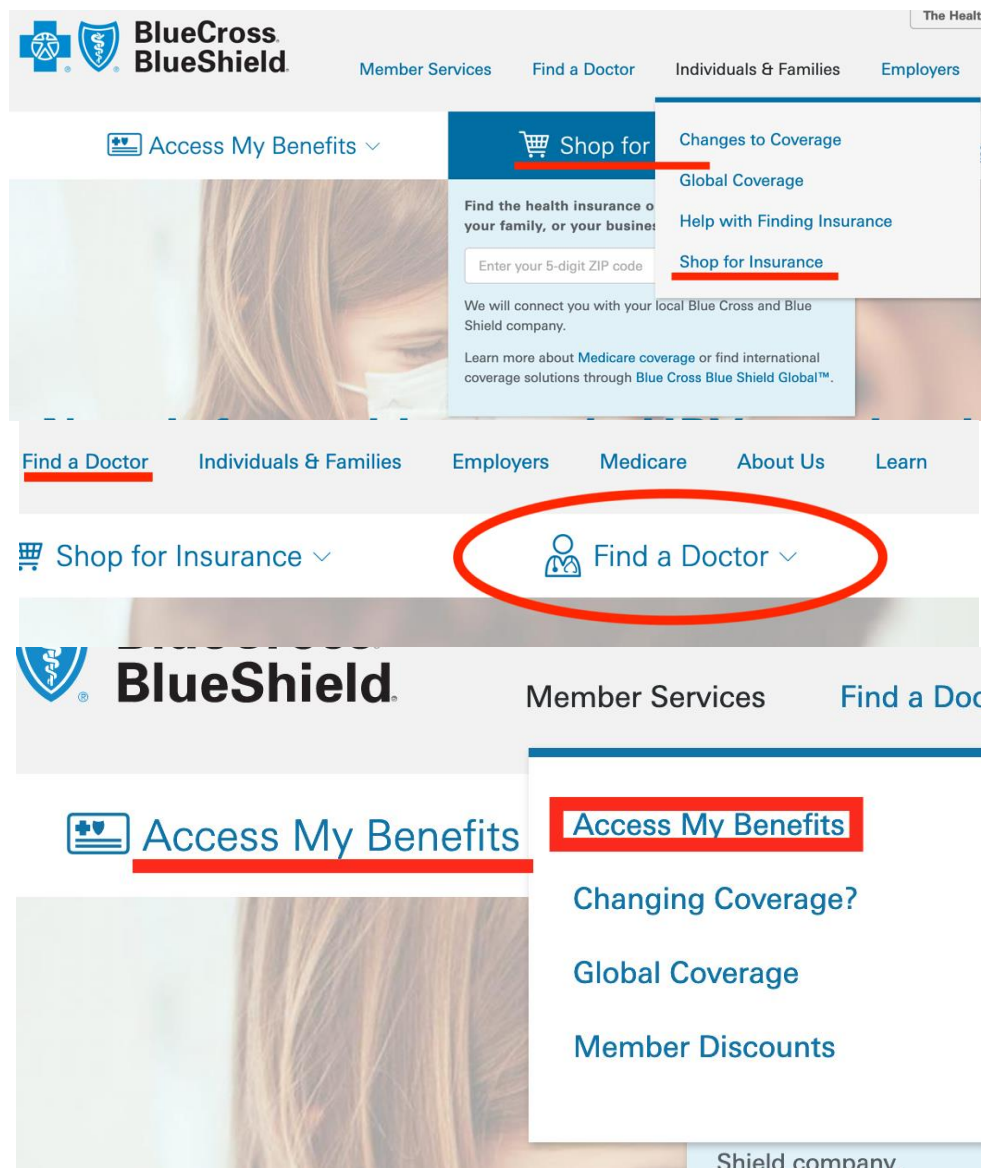
Severity (H/M/L): Your assessment as to whether the implication of the feedback is *low*, *medium*, or *high* severity.

Solutions / Trade-offs: Suggestion for the modifications that might be made to the user interface to address the issue or issues in this row. You **MUST** include trade-offs to be credible. If you can't think of some bad trade-off, say so.

Detailed Findings


Finding 1: Home menus

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency and standards • Error prevention • Aesthetic and minimalist design
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The menus repeat themselves, and can overlap and get in the way of other menus. • There are way too many paths to take
Screen / Scope	Entire site
Severity	Moderate
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove repeat menu options • Reduce number of pathways a user can take
Screen Captures	See below



Finding 2: Shop for insurance

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User control and freedom • Consistency and standards • Recognition rather than recall • Flexibility and efficiency of use
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does each region have its own site? • Users have to re-enter the zip code that they just entered on the new site to find what they need
Screen / Scope	Shop for insurance option
Severity	Moderate
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universalize the insurance finding process to one site • Auto-fill the zip code on the new site
Screen Captures	See below

 Shop for Insurance ▾

Find the health insurance option that is right for you, your family, or your business.


We will connect you with your local Blue Cross and Blue Shield company.

Learn more about [Medicare coverage](#) or find international coverage solutions through [Blue Cross Blue Shield Global™](#).

The following Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies serve members in the 46226 zip code.

[Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Indiana](#)

Federal employees, retirees, and their families are insured by the [Federal Employees Program \(FEP\)](#).



[Individual & Family](#)
[Medicare](#)
[Medicaid](#)
[Employers](#)
[Producers](#)
[Providers](#)
[CO](#)

Already a member? [Log in to your account](#) to compare or

Over 65 or Medicare eligible? [We have Medicare](#)

Find a plan that is right for you and your family.

Finding 3: Access my benefits

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency and standards • Aesthetic and minimalist design • Recognition rather than recall • Flexibility and efficiency of use
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You enter the first 3 digits of your plan to send you another website yet again • Does not give you the option to just log in
Screen / Scope	Access my benefits menu option
Severity	Moderate
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer the option to login right then and there • Do not send the user to another website. Fix your main one.
Screen Captures	See below

Access My Benefits ▾

As a current member, you can access your benefits and services from your local Blue Cross Blue Shield company.

Enter the first three letters of the Identification Number from your member ID card.

GO

[I DON'T HAVE MY MEMBER ID CARD](#)

Search

[Home](#) [Insurance Basics](#) [Shop Plans & Products](#) [Find a Doctor or Hospital](#) [Member Services](#) [Sign Up or Log In](#) ▾

Health Care Coverage You Can Depend On

Now more than ever, quality health care coverage is important. Let us help you find the right plan.

Member Login [Pay My Bill](#)

[Forgot your user name?](#)

[Forgot your password?](#)

Log In

[New User? Register Here](#)

Individual & Family
Apply for a 2021 Plan

Medicare
Explore Your Options

Medicaid
Review Our Plans

Finding 4: Site Map

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency and standards • Aesthetic and minimalist design • Flexibility and efficiency of use
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site map is located at the bottom of the screen, even though it is the easiest and most minimalist way to navigate the site • The map would not even be necessary if it weren't for the site's other heuristical issues
Screen / Scope	Site map
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site map should be easier to find • Just make a more easily navigable site in the first place
Screen Captures	See below



The screenshot shows the BlueCross BlueShield website. At the bottom of the page, there is a site map section titled "Sitemap" which lists various navigation links organized into categories like Member Services, Find a Doctor, Individuals & Families, Employers, Medicare, and About Us. A red box highlights the "Sitemap" link in the footer navigation bar.

BlueCross BlueShield

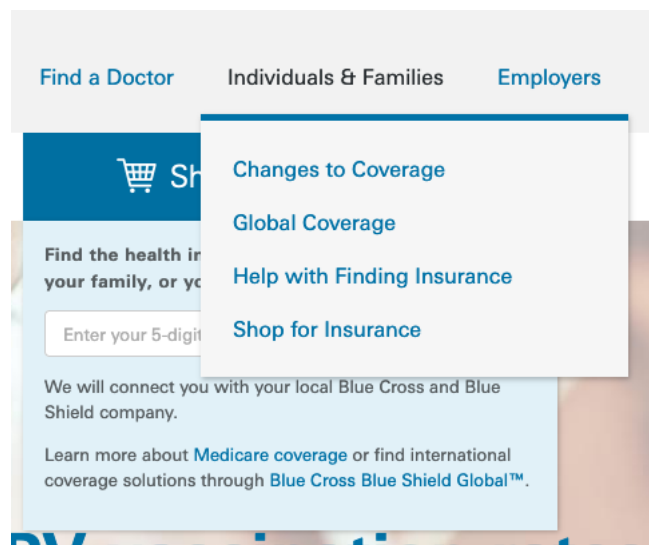
Member Services Find a Doctor Individuals & Families

Sitemap

- Member Services
 - Access My Benefits
 - Changing Coverage?
 - Global Coverage
 - Member Discounts
- Find a Doctor
- Individuals & Families
 - Changes to Coverage
 - Global Coverage
 - Help with Finding Insurance
 - Shop for Insurance
- Employers
 - Improving Care
 - Tailoring Network Solutions
 - Personalizing Employee Engagement
 - Innovating Purposefully
- Medicare
 - Find Coverage
 - Learn about Medicare
 - Help with Choosing Coverage
 - Understand Eligibility & Enrollment
- About Us
 - The BCBS System
 - National Labor Office
 - BCBS Companies and Licensees
 - Capabilities & Initiatives
 - BCBS Axis
 - Blue Distinction
 - Blue Distinction Specialty Care
 - Blue Distinction Center Finder
 - Transplant Resources
 - Blue Distinction Total Care
 - The Health of America
- BCBS Progress Health
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Leadership
- Careers
- The Health of America
 - Leading the Way
 - Healthcare Innovation

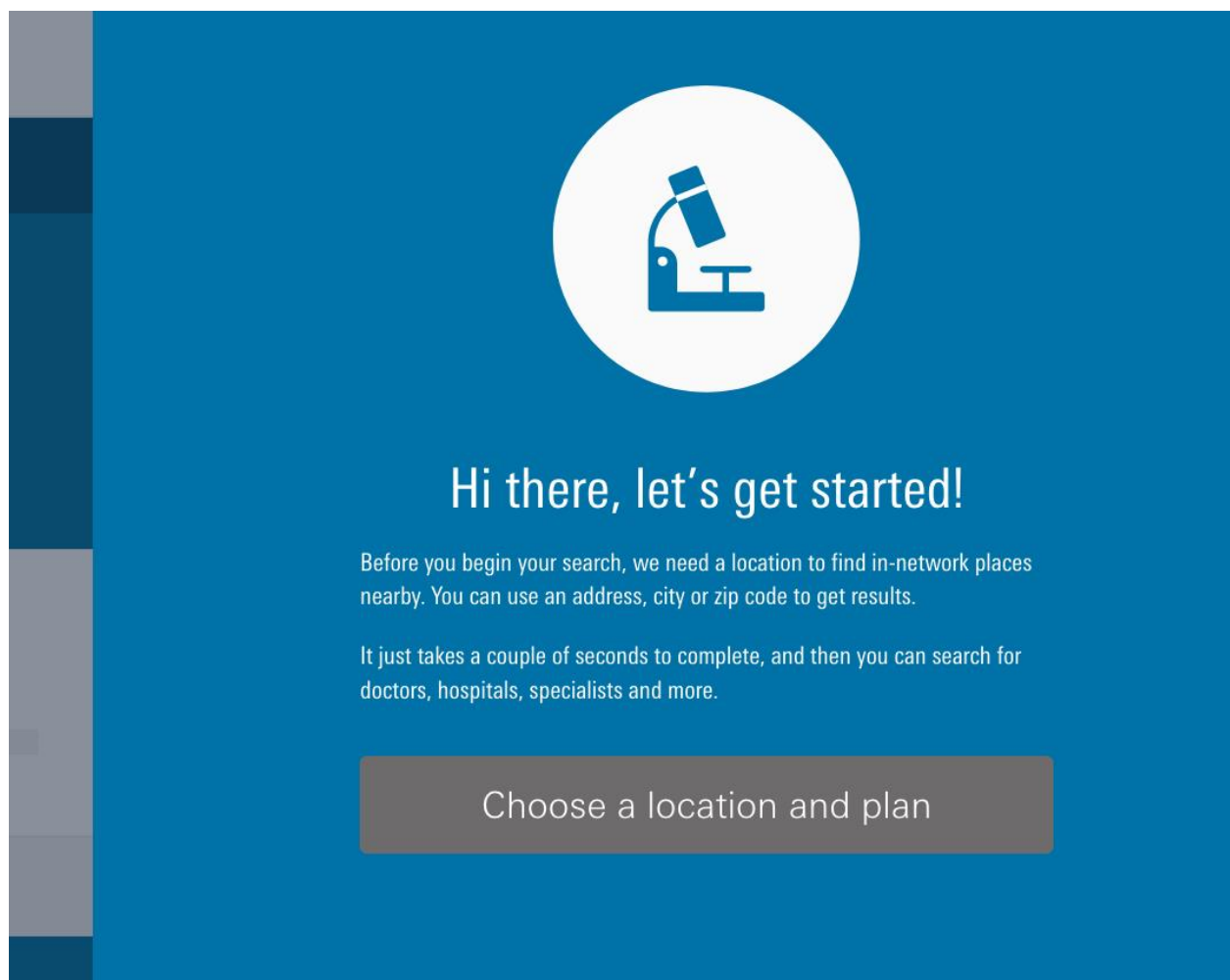
Finding 5: Menus

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Error prevention • User control and freedom
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The larger menu options must be clicked for drop down, but the smaller ones drop via mouseover • The smaller menus have a tendency to drop down over the larger one you are actually trying to work with • It is frustrating to work with 2 different menu mechanics
Screen / Scope	Menus
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardize menus • Shrink hover over box to prevent covering
Screen Captures	See below



Finding 6: Find doctors page

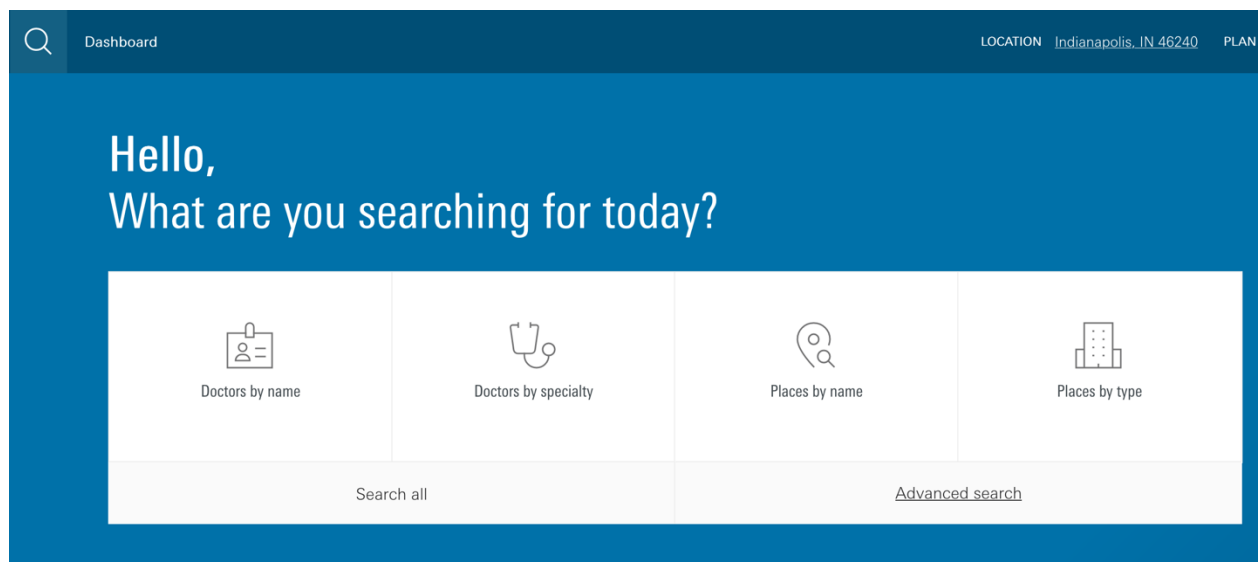
Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistency and standards• Flexibility and efficiency of use
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Even though zip code and prefix have already been entered on the home page, you must enter again before you can even use the search function• If the user must return to the home page, they have to start the process completely over
Screen / Scope	Find doctor page
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Save information entered on previous screen to auto-fill on the next
Screen Captures	See below



The

Finding 7: Find doctors search feature

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistency and standards• Match between system and the real world
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Searching for a doctor requires you to know who to search for in the first place<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Same applies to searching for a place• There is no directory of doctors to chose from
Screen / Scope	Search doctors
Severity	High
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redesign the search feature to supplement a directory of doctors in the user's specific area• Assume the user has absolutely no prior knowledge of the doctors in their area, or where to find them
Screen Captures	See below



[Back](#)

Doctors by name

Type a last name to learn if a doctor is in your network



Finding 8: Search all

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Match between the system and the real world• Consistency and standards
Feedback / Issues	The "search all" feature is assumed to be a directory but it is not. It suffers the same issue as the other search features.
Screen / Scope	Search all option
Severity	High
Solutions and Trade-offs	At the bare minimum, make this a link to the directory
Screen Captures	See below

[Back](#)

Search all

Type a name or phrase to find doctors, hospitals and more

Type at least two letters and we can start finding some matches for you

Finding 9: Advanced search

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help and documentation • User control and freedom • Match between the system and the real world • Aesthetic and minimalist design
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advanced search does not provide tools to help the average user find what they need, yet again. • Some of the categories for selection are completely unneeded, like "group affiliation" which means nothing to most people • The "distinctions" section is always blank no matter what options are chosen, even though it occupies the largest space on the
Screen / Scope	Advanced search
Severity	High
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This feature is supposed to be more useful than the simple search, yet it isn't. Make it useful • Eliminate unneeded categories, arrange the screen by importance
Screen Captures	See below

Advanced Search

People
Places

Basics

Gender:

Select a gender

☐ Accepting New Patients

Languages Spoken by Provider

Enter a language

☐ Spanish
☐ Abkhazian
☐ Achinese
☐ Afar
☐ Afrikaans
☐ Afro-Asiatic
☐ Ainu (Japani)
☐ Akan

Physicians

Patient Age Accepted:

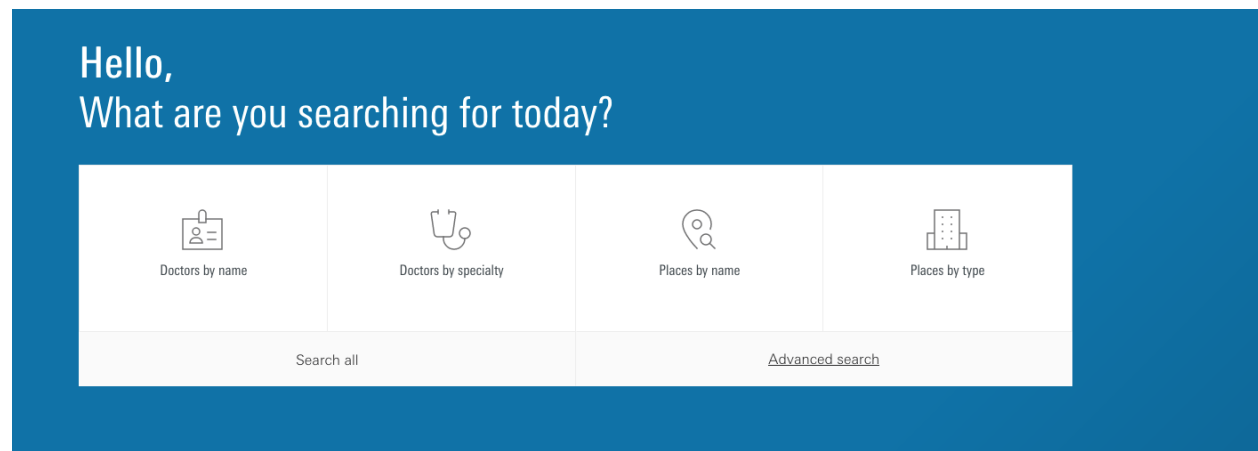
Select an age

☐ Board Certified
☐ Offers evening and/or weekend hours

Distinctions

Finding 10: Find doctor page (2)

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aesthetic and minimalist design
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a secondary link to shop for insurance on the find doctors page. Why would you need to purchase insurance when you're looking for a network doctor for insurance that you already have?
Screen / Scope	Find doctors page
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	Remove the option
Screen Captures	See below



Explore and learn more

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association has announced a System-wide initiative to eliminate barriers to members seeking diagnosis and treatment for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). More information regarding these changes, as well as ongoing updates during this outbreak can be found at <https://www.bcbs.com/coronavirus-updates>.

For the latest details on the coronavirus, along with prevention strategies, symptoms and general information, please read more at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Please see your Plan website or contact the number on the back of your card for detailed information regarding your specific benefit coverage.

Find Immediate Medical Care

Make an informed choice based on symptoms, convenience and cost. Learn more about your options [here](#).

[Search for Immediate Medical Care](#)



Locate Doctors Worldwide

Visit Blue Cross Blue Shield Global® Core to locate healthcare providers outside of the U.S.

[Search For Doctors](#)



Shop for Health Insurance

Request a quote from your local Blue company by calling 1-888-630-BLUE.

[Shop For Healthcare](#)

Finding 11: BCBS Progress Health

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic and minimalist design • Consistency and standards • Match between the system and the real world
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where does this even go? What does it mean? • Oh, another website, what a surprise.
Screen / Scope	Progress health link
Severity	Moderate
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better explain where this link even takes you • Integrate the other site into your main one. It does not need to be its own.
Screen Captures	See below

The screenshot shows the BCBS Progress Health website. At the top is a navigation bar with the BlueCross BlueShield logo and links for Member Services, Find a Doctor, Individuals & Families, Employers, Medicare, About Us, and Learn. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for Access My Benefits, Shop for Insurance, and Find a Doctor. The main content area features a large banner with the headline "New infographic reveals HPV vaccination rates are low despite risks of related cancers" and a background image of a child in a medical setting. Below the banner are two columns of text: "Learn more about what BCBS companies are doing to support their local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the Health of America." and "Millennial Health: Trends in Behavioral Health Conditions. New insights into the continuing decline in millennials' health." At the bottom of the main content area are two boxes: "HEALTHOFAMERICA.COM" with the subtitle "Data driven insights, stories of inspired healthcare solutions and the interactive BCBS Health Index" and "BCBS PROGRESS HEALTH" with the subtitle "Issue analysis, commentary and authoritative insights". Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for ABOUT, DATA, EXPLORE, PROGRESSHEALTH, ISSUES, COMMUNITY, and INSIGHTS. The bottom section features a large image of a woman with the headline "A 24/7 approach to treating serious mental illness" and a sub-headline "A 24/7 approach to treating serious mental illness". The text below the headline states: "Anthem BCBS of Nevada is bringing integrated care to Medicaid members suffering from trauma, suicide and complex mental health issues." and a "READ MORE" link.

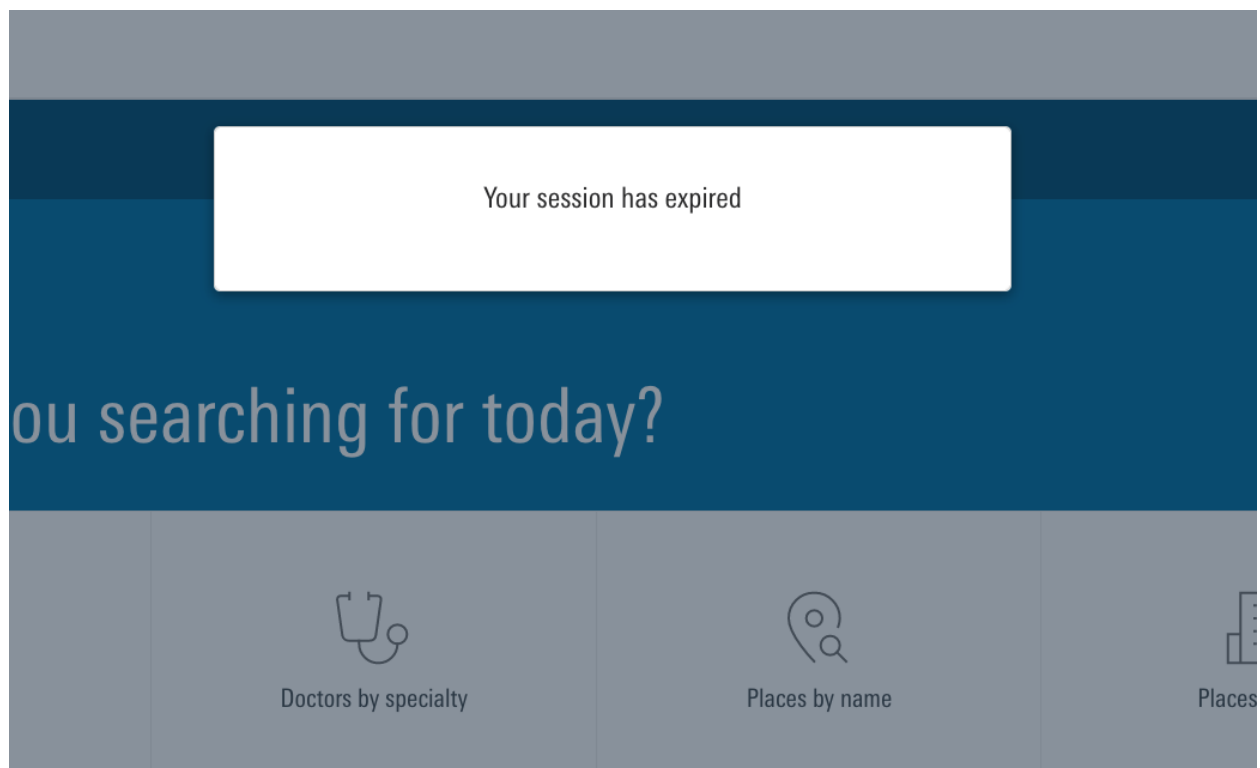
Finding 11: Health of America option

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic and minimalist design • Consistency and standards • Match between the system and the real world
Feedback / Issues	Despite being the only link on the entire page that indicates you may be redirected to another site, you actually are not. It takes you to another section of the same site
Screen / Scope	Health of America
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	Display the information in a way that does not indicate you may be exiting the site
Screen Captures	See below

The screenshot shows the BlueCross BlueShield website. The header includes the BlueCross BlueShield logo, navigation links (Member Services, Find a Doctor, Individuals & Families, Employers, Medicare, About Us, Learn), and a search bar. Below the header, there are links for 'Access My Benefits', 'Shop for Insurance', and 'Find a Doctor'. The main content area features a large banner about HPV vaccination rates, followed by two smaller sections: 'Learn more about what BCBS companies are doing to support their local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.' and 'Millennial Health: Trends in Behavioral Health Conditions'. At the bottom, there are two prominent boxes: 'HEALTHOFAMERICA.COM' (highlighted with a red box) and 'BCBS PROGRESS HEALTH'. The footer contains a blue cross logo, links for Careers, Contact Us, Healthcare Fraud, Privacy Policy, Terms & Conditions, Cookie Policy, and Sitemap, and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram.

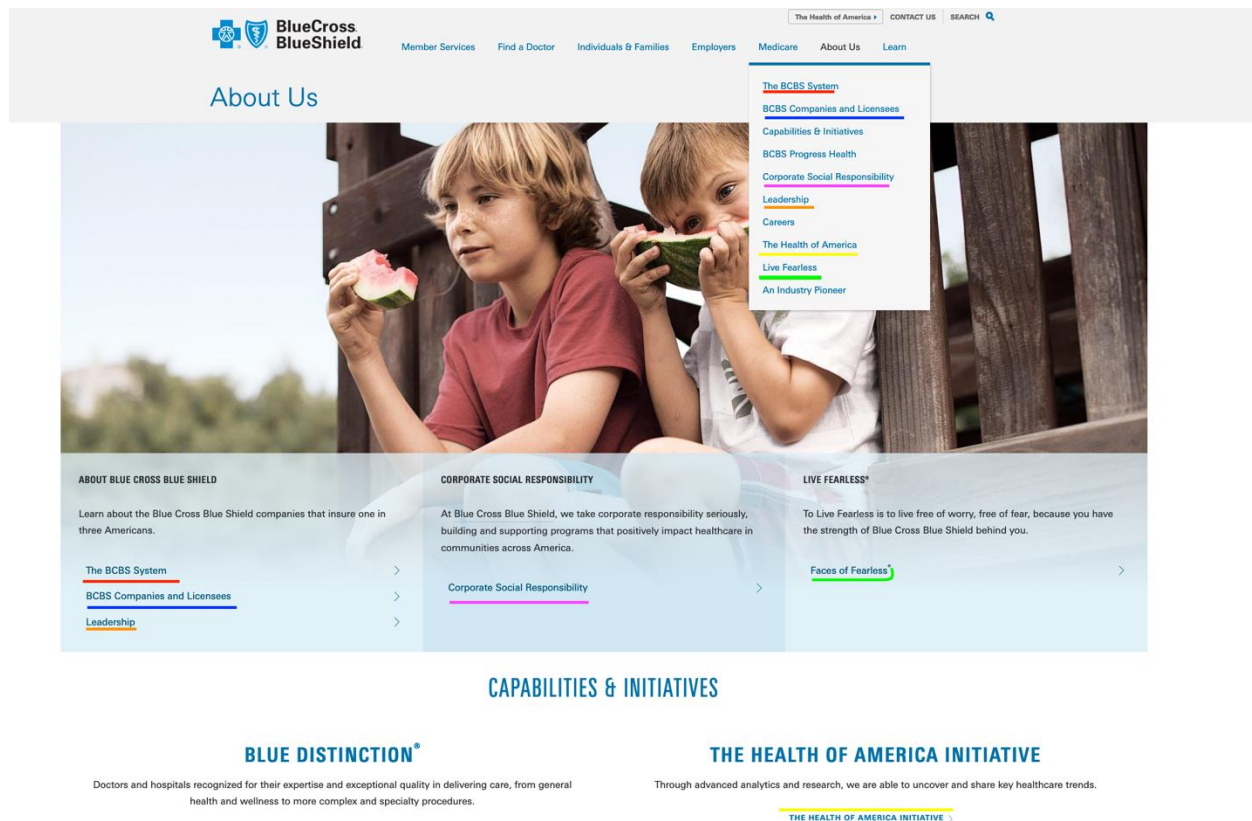
Finding 12: Session needlessly expires

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors• Visibility of system status• Flexibility and efficiency of use
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The session on the search page expires, despite lack of sensitive information on the page.• There is no timer or warning to indicate this might occur• There is no button to click when the pop up shows. May be unclear how to restart a session
Screen / Scope	Find doctor page, but maybe entire site
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Either remove the expiry altogether or limit it to when sensitive information is being exchanged• Warn the user that the session will expire in x amount of time• Add a button to at least acknowledge the expiry, so the user will have some idea what to do
Screen Captures	See below



Finding 13: About Us page

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and efficiency of use • Aesthetic and minimalist design
Feedback / Issues	Why does this need a landing page at all when most of the options are on the menu?
Screen / Scope	About Us page
Severity	Low
Solutions and Trade-offs	Either remove the page from the site entirely, or justify its use by providing a basic overview of what the company is about.
Screen Captures	See below



Finding 14: Doctor pages

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency and standards • Error prevention • Aesthetic and minimalist design
Feedback / Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much information on screen • Information is disorganized and unclear • Some information may be outdated
Screen / Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Schlage sense app pages
Severity	Medium
Solutions and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condense information, and group similar information together such as address and distance away • Remove the locations side bar. It just confuses the user • Remove the "Insurance details." Why would the website allow a user to make it to this screen if this doctor did not accept your insurance?
Screen Captures	See below

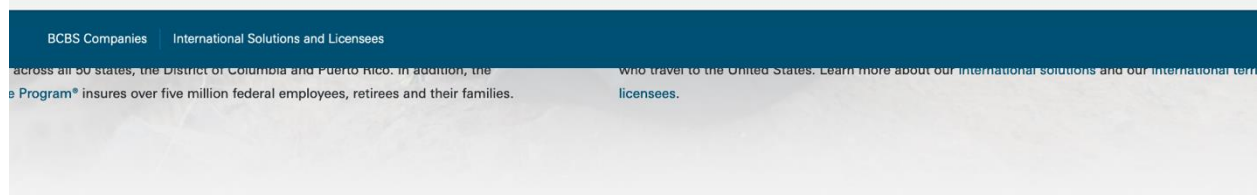
The screenshot shows a doctor's profile page for 'Dr. [Redacted] W, MD'. The page is cluttered with information. Red annotations highlight several issues:

- A red box labeled "Why?" points to the "Specialties: Psychiatry" field.
- Red arrows point to the address "5259 David St Indianapolis, IN 46226" and the phone number "Main: (317) 423-8425".
- A red line connects the "Locations" section on the right to the "Locations" label at the bottom left.
- A red line points from the "Locations" section to the text "Okay so where is he?"

The "Locations" section on the right lists five locations, each with a "Show info" link. The first location is "5259 David St Indianapolis, IN 46226".

Finding 15: Glossary

Heuristic(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and efficiency of use • User control and freedom
Feedback / Issues	The glossary does not have a search feature
Screen / Scope	Glossary
Severity	Medium
Solutions and Trade-offs	Add a search feature
Screen Captures	See below



BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD COMPANIES

STATE/TERRITORY	AVAILABLE COMPANIES
Alabama	■ Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama
Alaska	■ Premiera Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alaska
Arizona	■ Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona
Arkansas	■ Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield
California	■ Anthem Blue Cross ■ Blue Shield of California
Colorado	■ Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Colorado
Connecticut	■ Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Connecticut
Delaware	■ Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Delaware
District of Columbia	■ CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield
Florida	■ Florida Blue
Georgia	■ Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia
Hawaii	■ Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Hawaii
Idaho	■ Blue Cross of Idaho ■ Regence BlueShield of Idaho
Illinois	■ Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois

