



## Doctors on the Net

Both the CMA and its financial subsidiary, MD Management Ltd., have been working to develop and deliver services online. The demand is growing: according to the CMA's 1997 Physician Resource Questionnaire (PRQ), 41% of Canadian physicians were using the Internet as of January 1997. However, many doctors have difficulty finding and using the clinical, research and educational resources that are available because they are new to this relatively new medium.

To help them and the 23% of PRQ respondents who reported they plan to "go online" in the next 12 months, the CMA has developed a series of training courses, Doctors on the Net, which are tailored to meet doctors' specific needs.

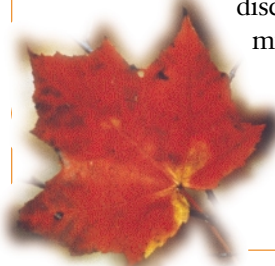
During the CMA's August annual meeting in Victoria, the first course, "Level 1: An Introduction to the Internet for Physicians," was presented at a University of Victoria computer lab. More than 40 physicians participated in 2 prototype sessions; they were presented by 2 information specialists from the CMA, Shona Lam and Deborah Scott-Douglas, and 2 Internet-savvy BC physicians, Michael Golbey and Kendall Ho. The course proved particularly popular with Victoria-area physicians — there was a waiting list for the Sunday-morning session.

To create the course the CMA drew on the experience of family physicians, specialists and educators, with Drs. Bill Easton, Fleur-Ange Lefebvre, Mark Roper and Cathy Younger-Lewis, as well as Golbey and Ho, making contributions. Study credits were awarded by the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, with Drs. Art

### Cool site

<http://oncolink.upenn.edu/>

This excellent site is maintained by the University of Pennsylvania Cancer Center and is dedicated to the myriad issues surrounding cancer. It is one of the Internet's older medically oriented sites — I can remember accessing it with a 2400-baud modem — but like good wine it has improved over time and become very popular, with more than 2 million accesses in July 1997 alone. It is designed for both medical professionals and patients. A disease-oriented menu allows browsers to find almost all adult or pediatric cancers by name and then link to sources of additional information. "Breast cancer" has links dealing with risk factors, screening, treatment options and support groups. The treatment section describes mastectomy, reconstruction, chemotherapy and bone marrow transplantation. Some of the information is aimed at care providers, particularly in areas such as the discussion of ongoing clinical trials, and these parts may overwhelm patients. However, you might want to tell patients and their families about it because this is such a rich repository of information. One section deals with frequently asked questions and covers everything from rectal examinations for prostatic cancer to the purported dangers of cell phones. Pain control, advance directives and psychosocial issues are also discussed. Family practitioners and specialists will find much useful information here, from current guidelines to the National Cancer Institute's exhaustive list of staging and treatments for all kinds of cancer. Visit this site. It is sure to answer some patients' questions and probably some of your own. — *Dr. Robert Patterson, [robpatterson@msn.com](mailto:robpatterson@msn.com)*



Macgregor and Neil Donen playing key roles in making this possible.

Participants in the Victoria course quickly made their way through the basics of Internet usage. The topics covered ranged from connecting to the Internet and security issues to the use of discussion groups and ways to search the Web effectively.

The course combined lectures with demonstrations and exercises. Students, who received an extensive course manual and software, will be able to share tips and experiences via an Internet discussion group created for them. Participants who also attended the CMA's annual meeting were able to practise their new skills at the *CMA Online* booth during breaks.

The course appeared to be a hit with participants. Dr. May Cohen of Hamilton said that before taking the course she had not realized how many resources were available on the association's Web site, *CMA Online*, let alone the entire Web. "And I had so much fun!"

Not only will the Level 1 course be presented again, but the CMA is also developing advanced courses. For further information, see the announcement appearing on page 896; for an up-to-the-minute schedule contact the CMA Library ([lams@cma.ca](mailto:lams@cma.ca); 800 663-7336 x2142 or 2144) or the Events and Conferences section of *CMA Online* ([www.cma.ca/cme/](http://www.cma.ca/cme/)). — *Ann Bolster, [bolsta@cma.ca](mailto:bolsta@cma.ca)*