



## One-stop shopping on the Web?

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Is one-stop shopping for doctors available on the Web? Not quite, but the CMA's *WebMed Links* ([www.cma.ca/webmed](http://www.cma.ca/webmed); [French] [www.cma.ca/webmed-f](http://www.cma.ca/webmed-f)) is a great starting point for physicians who want to conduct quick searches. It will also appeal to doctors who find that executing Internet searches is not always feasible given their time constraints and skill levels.

*WebMed Links* is a compilation of health and medicine-related Web sites developed specifically for practising clinicians and researchers. The sites have a strong Canadian focus but are not limited to this country. Selected sites are divided into 11 major subject categories (see sidebar), which range from clinical information to evidence-based health care and medical-reference sources. Each major category is then subdivided. For example, the section on clinical information is divided into different specialty areas, with additional areas being added regularly.

*WebMed Links* is a great resource for physicians who have to answer simple, specific questions. For example, if a patient asks for information about living with arthritis, begin by accessing a major-subject category, "Consumer health information." It has 3 subcategories: disease/health sites, general sites and news sites. Under the disease/health section is the subcategory "arthritis." Here you find a link to the Arthritis Society ([www.arthritis.ca/home.html](http://www.arthritis.ca/home.html)); it contains a category called "living with arthritis." You could also visit the general sites, where there is a link to Health Care Information Resources

## Major subject categories in *WebMed Links*

**Clinical information:** physician-oriented sites

**Clinical practice guidelines**

**Consumer health information**

**Evidence-based health care**

**Government health sites:** developed by governments in Canada and around the world

**Health technology assessment:** a selection of national and international sites

**Health and medical associations and organizations:** national and international offerings

**Medical journals and newsletters**

**Medical libraries:** Canadian and major international libraries

**Medical schools:** directories of Canadian, US and other schools and information for medical school applicants

**Medical reference sources**

([www-sl.mcmaster.ca/tomflem/top.html](http://www-sl.mcmaster.ca/tomflem/top.html)). If the "illness" icon is selected, a series of links that provide information about arthritis will appear.

Physicians must remember that even though the Web can be a marvellous source of information, it has several drawbacks and limitations and is not always the best source of reliable information. For example, if your patient asks about the risks and benefits of bone marrow transplantation to treat rheumatoid arthritis, the best place to begin this search would be in a medical database such as MEDLINE. (MEDLINE and several other massive databases are available free to CMA members; visit [www.cma.ca/osler](http://www.cma.ca/osler) for information.) For basic information, a textbook may be the best source. *WebMed Links* and other lists of this type are no substitute for a library, but they are a useful adjunct to physicians traditional sources of information.

As with any list of Web resources, it is impossible to warrant or guarantee the accuracy, completeness or timeliness of information found at

the sites listed by *WebMed Links*, and we cannot endorse the information contained in them. However, if you do find that links are not working properly or that a favourite link is not listed, let us know. We need your help to improve this service and make it more useful. To recommend a Web site that would benefit Canadian physicians, complete the online form ([www.cma.ca/webmed](http://www.cma.ca/webmed)) or send an email message to Jessie McGowan ([mcgowj@cma.ca](mailto:mcgowj@cma.ca)). Every suggestion will be reviewed for its relevance to *WebMed Links*.

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