

On the Net

New and improved: CMA's guidelines infobase now at MDs' fingertips

The CMA's online database of clinical practice guidelines (CPGs), the *CMA Infobase* (www.cma.ca/cpgs), made its much-anticipated debut in early March during the CMA Leadership Conference in Ottawa.

Formerly known as the *CPG Infobase*, the product was re-named *CMA Infobase* after recent focus group testing revealed that physicians did not have a clear understanding of the CPG acronym.

The new product represents a giant leap forward from the original collection of browsable lists launched in 1996. A search engine now allows direct searching of the CMA's rich internal CPG database, expanding coverage to guidelines from more than 100 developers and thereby establishing the Infobase as a one-stop, comprehensive national resource. The new version offers descriptive details on all current Canadian CPGs and supplementary information on their development, implementation and evaluation, as well as other resources such as quick reference guides and patient versions of guidelines. Most important, links to the electronic full text of both the guidelines and associated resources are included when available, as is any available structured abstract. Important contact information, including email links, is also incorporated.

A simple keyword search capability is offered from the *CMA Infobase* Home Page. However, for greater precision, use the Basic Search interface. Basic Search offers users the ability to combine keywords, medical subjects headings (MeSH), medical specialties and publication/review dates. Searches can be limited by language or by the date when records were added to the database. Users can create a personalized list from their search results and change record-display formats to view additional information.

A group of more than 30 volunteer physicians, health researchers and policy-makers, medical librarians, Webmasters

and staff of various Canadian specialty societies participated in beta testing the Infobase. Their feedback allowed the CMA to fine-tune the Infobase before its release. One important recommendation included the opening of a second browser window whenever users leave the site, allowing them to explore off-site resources without losing their position in the Infobase. Links to other reputable guideline collections have also been added to the Home Page.

The new interface will be launched in stages. A bilingual Advanced Search interface offering additional power and flexibility for creating and combining search sets, as well as for saving search strategies for later use, is anticipated later this year. — *Becky Skidmore*, CMA Infobase Manager

And the winner is . . .

CMAJ's second OSLE Challenge has been won by Dr. Henry Phillips of Kingston, Ont. (see *CMAJ* 2000;162[2]: 251). OSLE (the CMA's free online search service) users were asked to submit the MEDLINE searching strategy

that they used to answer this question: Is there any evidence that zinc lozenges shorten the duration and severity of the common cold in children? A copy of Jacalyn Duffin's *History of Medicine: a Scandalously Short Introduction*, goes to

Phillips. Details of the strategy needed to conduct the search and various searching techniques will be reviewed in a future On the Net column. Physicians interested in using OSLE can contact Member Services, 800 457-4205.