



CMAJ launches new online-medicine page

Welcome!

With this issue we're launching CMAJ's first column dedicated to developments in the online world of medicine. It will be compiled by Ann Bolster, the CMA's associate director of new media, who would welcome comments, feedback, hot tips and information about cool sites (bolsta@cma.ca).

Saving on search time

Dr. Rob Patterson (robpatterson@mem.po.com), a Canadian general surgeon currently doing a fellowship in medical informatics at the University of Utah, has discovered a way to speed your search of medical content on the World Wide Web. The new search engine is <http://www.mwsearch.poly.edu>.

"Medical World Search," writes Patterson, a longtime contributor to CMAJ, "is maintained by the Polytechnic Research Institute for Devel-

opment and Enterprise, Polytechnic University, New York, and is the first search engine developed especially for the medical field.

"Normally, if you want to search the Net, you use one of about a dozen major commercial search engines, such as AltaVista, Webcrawler, Yahoo, Lycos, Infoseek and Excite. Each works on a different principle: some search by topic and others by keyword, while still others actually rate or review the services. For example, AltaVista will search up to 30 million Web pages and may return tens of thousands of matches for each term you enter, most of which are irrelevant to your search. You end up wasting a tremendous amount of time wading through all this extraneous material to find a few pearls.

"By contrast, Medical World Search limits itself to about 30 000 important medical sites. It understands medical terminology and uses as its thesaurus the Unified Medical Language System from the US National Library of Medicine, which also brings us MEDLINE. Should you wish to broaden your search, it also has the ability to launch queries into other search engines. However, the bottom line is that it searches only medically relevant sites, and your search will yield more wheat and less chaff."

Patterson thinks it should be added to your Bookmarks and used as a starting point for queries on medical topics. A voluntary free registration at the site saves your past 10 searches, which will be accessible the next time you sign on. Those who choose not to register can still use all features at the site.

CMAJ Online
<http://www.cma.ca/journals/cmaj>

Highlights from CMA Online

Check out the CMA CPG Infobase (<http://www.cma.ca/cpgs>), which now provides access to 200 full-text clinical practice guidelines published by the CMA, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control.

Cool sites

<http://www.lcs.mgh.harvard.edu>

DXplain, developed by Dr. Octo Barnett and colleagues in the Laboratory of Computer Science at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, is one of the first examples of medical decision-support systems. The site provides access to a structured knowledge base from user selections of clinical findings. Once the disease entity is identified, the user is presented with a detailed discussion and literature references. Source: Dr. Gary Malet (gmalet@surfer.win.net).

<http://uhs.bsd.uchicago.edu/uhs/topics/uhs-teaching.html>

Topics in Primary Care is a teaching resource originating from University Health Services, University of Chicago. The topics are grouped in categories ranging from health promotion and prevention through specific systems and provide an outline of teaching points and a case study for each topic. The resource is not comprehensive but is easy to use. Source: Dr. Philip F. Hall (phall@mail.sbgh.mb.ca).



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