



## Two years and counting for CMA Online

It's now 2 years since the CMA launched *CMA Online*, its site on the World Wide Web. As the first national medical association in the world to create a Web site, the CMA was ahead of its time. However, it was in perfect step with the scientific community in recognizing that the opportunities presented by electronic networking — fast communication, efficient searching of databases, rapid access to the latest research — were now readily available to the least computer-literate people thanks to the creators of the Web.

For the CMA, a Web site represented a new vehicle for delivering its message and making its policies readily accessible, and for promoting the medical profession while building an online library of credible and authoritative medical and health information. Its staff developed expertise in online publishing, preparing for the day when electronic communication, rather than paper journals and newsletters, would become the norm.

It is April 1997 and that day has not yet arrived, and physicians who use the Internet regularly are still in the minority. But the CMA is no longer alone on the Web. Four of its divisions have sites. Two (the Alberta Medical Association and Ontario Medical Association) have long-established, large and active sites, while those of the other two (the British Columbia Medical Association and Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association) are quite new and still small. Several of the CMA's affiliate societies have sites; the CMA hosts two of them — sites of the Canadian Anaesthetists' Society and the Canadian Association

<http://www.cma.ca>

### Cool sites

#### <http://www.gretmar.com>

WebDoctor was developed as "a quick, efficient lauchpad for family docs, especially those in rural/isolated areas who want to find high-quality, peer-chosen/reviewed medical links," says Dr. Karen Breeck ([karen@gretmar.com](mailto:karen@gretmar.com)), a family physician in Timmins, Ont. Her husband, Warren Lampitt, is the technical whiz behind this cutting-edge site, which offers communication support that includes a real-time chat room, a bulletin board and an online forum, CardNet, that enables family physicians to communicate with cardiologists in Sudbury, Ont. WebDoctor showcases Canadian links as much as possible. Breeck and Lampitt do learning sessions on the Internet for doctors in their area, and Breeck has been on both radio and television recently, advising patients how to use and not use the Internet for research related to their health.

of Radiologists. All are linked from the *CMA Online* Web links page ([http://www.cma.ca/other\\_r.htm](http://www.cma.ca/other_r.htm)).

Since *CMA Online* was launched, sister medical associations around the world have built sites, often beginning with a journal and later including corporate information. The next step for many is to provide, behind the site's public face, opportunities that are available only to their members: direct access to the information they need to answer day-to-day questions, access to services that can be provided far more efficiently through the Web and access to colleagues belonging to their association. Mac Armstrong, the British Medical Association's secretary, noted in the January 1997 edition of *BMA News Review* that the BMA, in launching its Web site (<http://www.bma.org.uk>) that month, had "entered a new age of communication

with its members." The BMA, like the CMA, is investing substantially in networking technology throughout its organization, "enabling us to share our knowledge and skills in more effective ways." That, of

course, is the principle underlying the Internet.

As the CMA enters its third year "on the Net," it is undertaking a major technologic and content enhancement of *CMA Online*; this is being done in partnership with its wholly owned financial subsidiary, MD Management Ltd. The enhancement is designed to make the Web site and its associated products and services indispensable to CMA members and MD Management clients. For the details, keep reading this column.

### Highlights from CMA Online

Members can find out what the CMA has been doing on their behalf in a new section of *CMA Online*. "CMA projects and initiatives" (<http://www.cma.ca/canmed/projects>) provides summaries of current initiatives, as well as final reports. It includes "Temperature rising," a monthly column on CMA activities, media coverage, government action and the efforts of physicians across the country related to the debate on the future of the health care system.