



CMA trying to jump start MD interest in Internet

Physicians are swarming to the Internet and being amazed at the ease with which it allows them to communicate with colleagues and get the clinical information they need. Or are they?

The 1997 CMA Physician Resource Survey determined that even though almost 75% of physicians use computers, only 41% visit the Internet. Of those who did not use it, more than 60% said they never intend to do so. Among female physicians, only 31% reported that they are online.

Anyone trying to convince physicians to go online faces many challenges, but the major one is simply getting them to give the Internet a try. Last year the CMA decided to tackle the problem by offering courses to introduce neophytes to the joys of using this online ocean of information, employing email and conducting searches for health and medical information. These Doctors on the 'Net courses have been a huge success because they are designed specifically for physicians.

"These courses offer an excellent opportunity to learn the Internet's medical aspects," said Ottawa family physician Mano Murty, who attended a recent CMA course in Toronto. "Before the course I was using general search engines and hoping to find the clinical answers I was looking for."

Navigating the Web can be a daunting task for beginners, but the Doctors on the 'Net courses have shown that when physicians know where and how to search cyberspace, they can find useful information. "We are inundated with information and much of what is pushed at us is not

peer reviewed," said Dr. Robert Janicki, a Victoria family physician and avid Web user.

He provided several examples of how the Internet has helped him of-



Dr. Mano Murty: searching for the right search engines

fer better patient care and said its ability to provide information rapidly from a variety of sources is a major benefit. He currently conducts searches with the Ovid search system offered through *CMA Online*.

"I recently saw a patient who suffered from premature ejaculation and I was dissatisfied with what I could find locally regarding its treatment," he said. "I did a search and could pull the information I needed from an up-

to-date review article in the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*."

Janicki, one of many physicians participating in a trial of the *CMA Online* gateway to Ovid, is helping to customize and refine the service. The CMA plans are to phase in the project for all members this year.

Vancouver family physician Barbara Fehlau, another member of the Ovid trial group, said searches provide great CME opportunities. "As I ask more important clinical questions for my practice, I am learning more medicine," she said. "This is key in the rapid changes we see in medicine's knowledge base."

Murty, a relative novice, and Janicki and Fehlau, the avid Web surfers, personify the gap in experience among physicians using the Internet. The gap also highlights the challenges organizations like the CMA face in trying to provide Internet services for their members. For more information on future Doctors on the 'Net courses, contact Shona Lam, lams@cma.ca; 800 267-9703 x2142. For information about access to OVID through CMA Online, contact Deidre Green, cmalibrary@cma.ca; 800 267-9703 x2255.

— Steven Wharry

Cool site

www.cheo.on.ca/bpd/index.html

Physicians may wish to refer parents to this site, which was created by Dr. Tom Kovesi, a pediatric respirologist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa. It is designed for parents of infants with bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) but includes therapeutic information that primary care physicians may find useful. BPD affects about 20% of patients released from neonatal intensive care units but little information on its treatment is available for parents, either in print or on the Internet. There are only 2 BPD sites on the World Wide Web and this site is the most detailed.