



## Broadcasting comes to the Internet

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The 500-channel universe is coming to a computer near you thanks to the latest Internet craze, Webcasting. With the right software anyone can tune in the current CBC Radio broadcast, watch the latest news headlines from Discovery Online and CNN, or run a prerecorded video on anything from soup to nuts. This year, for the first time, doctors could watch proceedings at the CMA's August annual meeting live on the Web.

For the medical community, Webcasting offers many specialized services. Today, any surfer can tune in and listen to an audio program on the latest medical and scientific discoveries ([www.discovery.com/past/sciencelive/moremedicine.html](http://www.discovery.com/past/sciencelive/moremedicine.html)), see a prerecorded lecture about depression or obsessive-compulsive disorders ([www.mentalhealth.ucla.edu/webcasting/](http://www.mentalhealth.ucla.edu/webcasting/)), or tune into a live show on open heart or eye surgery ([webevents.broadcast.com/arivision/eyesurgery/view.html](http://webevents.broadcast.com/arivision/eyesurgery/view.html)). There are even Webcasting sites covering the popular medical dramas on TV such as *ER* ([www.videoseeker.com/searchhot.cgi?nbc.index;er](http://www.videoseeker.com/searchhot.cgi?nbc.index;er)).

In a recent move, Yahoo, the popular online search tool, bought the first online broadcaster for \$5.7 billion. In acquiring Broadcast.com ([www.broadcast.com](http://www.broadcast.com)), Yahoo chief executive Tim Koogle stated: "This acquisition is a natural extension of our strategy to deliver the ultimate experience to Web users and a powerful advertising and distribution platform for both companies' content, advertising and business services."

Luckily for the medical practitioner, there is steak as well as sizzle with this new Web tool. The useful and valuable material available via Webcast includes medical lectures, CME courses and in-

teractive grand round sessions that allow for 2-way learning.

Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, is a pioneer in this field. Last year physi-



cians from 20 different hospitals took part in Internet-based video grand rounds sessions ([www.dl.cornell.edu/od198/courses/rounds.stm](http://www.dl.cornell.edu/od198/courses/rounds.stm)).

"When the doctors watch grand rounds on the Internet, they see everything that their colleagues in the audience saw at the time of the presentation, exactly the way they saw it," explains David Lipsky of Cornell's Office of Distance Learning. A viewer can tune into a live Webcast or access the archives for later viewing or reviewing.

Think of the benefits this kind of service can provide for busy physicians or those living in remote areas. Life will no longer have to be scheduled around getting to a distant CME session, because this technology lets physicians call up the lecture of their choice or take the class when they want and where they want.

According to Cornell's official release, several doctors who took part in last year's trial of the program reported that the Internet grand rounds were equal or superior to attending the sessions in person.

As Dr. George Martin, chair of the Department of Medicine at the New

York Hospital Medical Center of Queens, put it: "There can be real frustration among physicians in private practice because they are unable to take time from their office hours and patient commitments to attend important medical conferences. This new technology is a perfect opportunity for them to have access to blockbuster grand rounds presentations on the weekends or in the evenings."

To find out what Webcasting opportunities are available for physicians on the Internet, seek out Broadcast.com's medical

guide ([www.broadcast.com/edu/medical.stm](http://www.broadcast.com/edu/medical.stm)) or Realguide's medical category ([realguide.real.com/category.xml?category\\_uid=71](http://realguide.real.com/category.xml?category_uid=71)). For professional CME, visit Stanford University's Radiology Online ([radiologycme.stanford.edu/online](http://radiologycme.stanford.edu/online)) or Johns Hopkins Medicine Rounds ([www.broadcast.com/edu/jhmr/listen/](http://www.broadcast.com/edu/jhmr/listen/)).

In these latter cases, the courses are offered online using audio, video and static slide projection. This lets doctors listen and watch the lecturer in one window while viewing the presenter's slide presentation in another.

Unfortunately, Canadian sources of online CME are limited, although this column recently mentioned one source (see *CMAJ* 1999;160[5]:697). The number of Canadian sites offering the service is bound to grow quickly, however.

To utilize these services, users must first download RealAudio Player ([www.real.com/products/player/](http://www.real.com/products/player/)) and Windows Media Player ([www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/)). Both are available free of charge and run on nearly all personal computers, both PC and Macintosh. — Michael O'Reilly, [moreilly@cancom.net](mailto:moreilly@cancom.net)