

MAIN/DQIN
Meeting
December 8th

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From the Editors

Using the Web to Support Quality Asthma and Diabetes Care

The fall issue of Progress Notes is devoted to helping you use the web more effectively. As many people have discovered, there is a plethora of information available online, however, weeding through it all and identifying useful websites takes a tremendous amount of time. The on-line quality clearinghouse of the American Academy of Family Practice listed over 8 million possible links for asthma and diabetes. We have included information on approximately 25 of our favorites.

Other features of this issue are articles on Internet usage and addresses and descriptions for asthma, diabetes, quality management and outcome data sites. Progress Notes will now also include a special, pull-out supplement designed to be copied and distributed to patient, families and colleagues. This time we have one on accessing diabetes and asthma information from the Internet. We hope you like the new format. ■

Tips for Successful Internet Use

Clinical practice guidelines, quality management tools, conference proceedings, workgroup reports and data sets are among the many quality management resources currently available through the Internet. The relative ease of website construction has resulted in a proliferation of sites and information. Users must be careful in relying on this information and should be alert for inaccuracies. Problems may exist with source verification, content accuracy and validity. Many sites are not routinely updated or may post information that has not been independently verified by a clinician or quality management professional. A recent editorial in JAMA (April 16, 1997) identified indicators of a quality website.

Authorship: authors and contributors affiliations and relevant credentials should be provided.

Attribution: references and sources for content should be listed clearly and all relevant copyright information noted.

Disclosure: web site ownership should be prominently and fully disclosed, as should sponsorship, advertising, underwriting, commercial funding arrangements or support, or potential conflicts of interest. This applies to hyperlinks to other sites.

Currency: dates indicating when content is posted and updated should be provided.

Using the Internet can often lead to information paralysis, the inability to move forward due to a fear of not having enough information. You may want to apply a quality management approach to website review as many sites discuss the same information. Try asking yourself the following questions.

- What is my overall aim?
- What specific areas are related to this aim?
- What are my questions related to this area?
- What information is needed to answer the questions?
- What sites are most likely to provide the information needed?

Then bookmark only those which appear most useful.

- Be clear about what information you need before logging on. Go only to those sites that provide you with the information you need at that time.
- Write down the steps you take when web searching so you can retrace useful paths and avoid returning to irrelevant or inaccurate sites.
- Limit the time you spend searching the Internet, it is very easy to lose time by wandering.
- Review your bookmarks periodically to stay on top of the latest information and resources. ■

Key Sites for Resources and Support

MAIN and DQIN spent some time checking out websites that provide information on quality management processes to enhance clinical care. The list below identifies several websites that are current, clear to navigate, and understandable. PLEASE NOTE: This is not an endorsement of the information or materials promoted at any site.

www.aafp.org/quality - The American Academy of Family Physicians' Quality Clearinghouse

- comprehensive lists of quality management journals, newsletters and other publications
- quality management products
- information on upcoming conferences and CME programs
- basic news and updates from the field of quality management and clinical care
- reviews and links to other organizational websites

www.nahq.org/resource.htm - Resource Center of the National Association for Healthcare Quality

- Reviews of resources and links on quality standards, bench marking, performance/outcome measurement, clinical practice guidelines, alternative educational modalities and disease management

www.jcaho.org - Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO)

- information about the progress of the ORYX initiative and its application to your institution. (ORYX is an effort to integrate outcome and performance measures into the accreditation process)
- link to the JCAHO IMSystem (one of five performance measurement sets specified by JCAHO)
- library of healthcare quality indicators

www.ambulatory-innovations.com - Ambulatory Innovations

- publications and systems for primary/ambulatory care providers on telephone triage, quality assessment, management and improvement
- how-to publications: "Telephone Triage Protocols for Primary Care," "Implementing TQM in Primary Care: Paradigms and Piranhas," "Quality Audit Systems for Primary Care," and "Quality Medical Records for Primary Care Centers"
- access to the software program, AMBUQUAL II

Finding Quality Management Data on Line

The Internet is making the acquisition of data much easier for those trying to monitor and evaluate the quality of their clinical care. Most of the information is useful for comparing an organization's outcomes with state, regional or national trends and can help establish a baseline for organizing improvement efforts. There are two general types of data resources available, static and dynamic.

Static information is about general data trends, i.e.

incidence and prevalence data for asthma. A common form are fact sheets produced by advocacy organizations or government reports that can be downloaded directly or requested through email. Some drawbacks are that this information is often outdated or addresses outcomes for very limited populations. Be certain to check all dates and sources.

The American Lung Association and the American Diabetes Association also provide this type of information in their websites, as does the federal government through the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, and others.

www.lungusa.org/asthma/index.html - American Lung Association

www.diabetes.org/ada/diabetesinfo.htm - American Diabetes Association

www.niddk.nih.gov/health/diabetes/diabetes.htm - National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases

www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/allergystat.htm - National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Searchable and dynamic data sources: The state and federal governments regularly produce updates on health status indicators and health service utilization. There are several websites that provide easy access to this data in report form and through searchable databases which allow you to retrieve information specific to a region, population or outcomes indicators.

www.state.ma.us/dhcfp - Massachusetts Department of Health Care Finance and Policy

- access to state level quality management data sets including preventable hospitalization
- customized data may also be requested

www.state.ma.us/dph - Massachusetts Department of Public Health

- Publications and Statistics - state level public health outcomes data

www.state.ma.us/dph/mchip1.htm - MassCHIP Massachusetts Community Health Profile

- automated information service of 18 data sets to build customized health status and health outcomes reports

www.cdc.gov/nchswww/datawh/datawh.htm - National Center for Health Statistics

- searchable access to federal government statistics on a variety of health outcomes projects including Healthy People 2000

www.wonder.cdc.gov/ - Center for Disease Control

- single point of access to a variety of CDC reports, guidelines and numeric public health data

www.ahcpr.gov/data/ - Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

- federal agency that researches quality standards and guidelines for health care services.
- access to data collected through the Healthcare Cost

(continued to page 7)

Getting Diabetes Information from the Internet

Access Health Information on the Internet, But Be Wary

by John Renner, MD

More health information is available today than anyone could have imagined just a few years ago. The Internet is the latest technology that makes it fun and easy to get the recent scoop on health problems. For those who have not yet ventured onto the web, visit your local library or community college and ask for some help. Within 10 minutes you can be surfing the net. However be aware that almost anyone can be a publisher, so you need to be a savvy consumer of health information. Along with excellent and timely information, there are some shady and misleading sites with downright wrong information on the Internet. Health professionals should share the following precautions with their patients to help them protect themselves from false information they may encounter on the web.

- Discuss the health information with your personal physician.
- Be wary of sales pitches that can accompany the information.
- Beware of someone who has a cure for your problem, especially if it's cure you have never heard of before.
- Be skeptical of a product said to be a secret. It may be secret due to fear of prosecution for promoting a scam.
- If someone tells you that you should stop taking all of your current medicines, consult your physician.
- Do not provide confidential medical or financial information even in a survey format.
- Know and check the references of every source.

- Never give your Internet password to anyone.
- Do not respond to unsolicited e-mail.
- Be sure that you verify any medical claims with a voluntary agency, such as the Osteoporosis Foundation or the American Cancer Society, and with your family physician.

This article was reprinted with permission from Rural Clinician Quarterly, Summer 1998, Vol.8, No.3. For more information, contact the National Rural Health Association, One West Armour Blvd, Suite 203, Kansas City, MO 64111, (816-756-3140).

SUGGESTED SITES

There are plenty of sites on the Internet to get accurate and up-to-date information on diabetes. Here are a few sites you might want to check.

Healthfinder- www.healthfinder.gov

This site offers easy access to good health information, links to on-line magazines and newsletters, information on support groups, and leads on government agencies and other organizations with useful information about diabetes.

American Diabetes Association - www.diabetes.org/default.htm

This site provides a connection to the nation's largest advocacy, training, and education organization working to eliminate diabetes. Patient and family information is available, as are tips on living with diabetes, recipes, and opportunities to participate in advocacy by calling your congressman or telling your story. To read the ADA newsletter "Diabetes Advocate" type www.diabetes.org/advocate/. You can also find other websites by typing www.diabetes.org/InternetResources.htm.

Ask NOAH About: Diabetes - www.noah.cuny.edu/diabetes.diabetes.html

NOAH is a website maintained by the New York Academy of Medicine. Their diabetes site provides

Getting Diabetes Information from the Internet

detailed information on topics related to the management of diabetes including: standards of care, types of diabetes, eye disease, gender and race-specific issues, exercise, dealing with stress, medication, nutrition and prevention. The site also has a comprehensive list of links to other diabetes organizations, research groups and news services.

The Diabetes Monitor - www.diabetesmonitor.com

A comprehensive link to many different diabetes sites on the web. It also catalogues the information so it is easier to sort through.

Children with Diabetes - www.childrenwithdiabetes.com

This site is organized into three sections, Clinic, People, and Sources. Through Clinic you can ask questions of diabetes experts, such as in school management of diabetes. It also lets you investigate diabetes camps and find nutrition information. The People section gives information on how individuals deal with diabetes. It has a place to display art, a message board and a chat room. Sources provide access to news, advocacy information and links with other sites.

Doctor's Guide to the Internet-Diabetes - www.pslgroup.com/DIABETES.HTM

This is an award-winning site that can be used by anyone, not just doctors. It is organized into five sections: medical news and alerts, diabetes information, discussion and news groups, related sites, and staying current. It has support from many different pharmaceutical companies and covers many other health conditions in addition to diabetes.

Managing Diabetes Discussion Groups - www.joslin.harvard.edu/managing/discussion.html

This site supports two on-line discussion groups - getting motivated to stay with your diabetes care, and being a family member of someone living with diabetes. Participation in these on-line groups requires a regular email account. This is part of the Joslin Diabetes Center website,
www.joslin.harvard.edu.

FREE COMPUTER USE

There are many places across the state where you can use a computer to search the internet for free.

Regional Massachusetts Prevention Centers - just call the number in your area and ask how you can visit the Prevention Center and use the Internet for free.

- Greater Boston - 617-451-0049
- Metro East in Central Square and Quincy - 617-441-0700 or 1-888-272-5155
- Metro West in Framingham - 508-875-5419
- Southeast/Upper Regional in Brockton - 508-583-2350
- Northeast Region in Danvers - 1-800-323-2244
- Merrimack Valley in Lawrence - 508-688-2323 or 1-800-LIVEWELL
- Central Massachusetts in Worcester - 508-752-8083 or 1-800-752-8083
- Lower Pioneer Valley in Springfield - 413-732-2009 or 1-800-789-3070
- Greater Western Massachusetts - 413-584-3880

Other places where you might be able to use the internet for free include Public Libraries and Public Schools. Call the library or school in your town to find out if you can use their computers. If they have free computers, ask them when you can come use them and if someone will be around to help you. ■

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- If someone tells you that you should stop taking all of your current medicines, consult your physician.
- Do not provide confidential medical or financial information even in a survey format.
- Know and check the references of every source.

- Never give your Internet password to anyone.
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American Lung Association - www.lungusa.org/nav.html

This website primarily provides fact sheets, ranging from basic information about asthma to choosing an asthma summer camp for your child. The ALA site (www.lungusa.org) also provides information about the organizations training, advocacy, and research activities.

e-Asthma - www.e-asthma.com/

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends e-Asthma and it is one of the only websites designed and updated on a weekly basis by a family practice doctor. Dr. Leonidas writes regular features on such topics as, "How to determine your quality of life" and "How to test inhaler fullness." He also has a Basics section that covers 17 topics including, "Goals

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of Asthma Management” and “Guidelines for Referrals.” You can search his website to find old articles and other information.

Better Health-Asthma Profile - fbhc.org/Patients/BetterHealth/Asthma/home.html

This website has great links to other patient and family education sites. It also provides a general overview of asthma triggers and symptoms. Basic information about asthma is also given through the “Fast Facts” section of the site. The Foundation for Better Health is a non-profit corporation promoting health education and receives money from groups such as the American Cancer Society.

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology - www.aaaai.org/public.default

This site has information both for patients and doctors on diagnosis, treatment, and living with asthma. The patient information section is searchable for fact sheets, patient support organizations, resources and articles about asthma in the news. There is also a special section just for kids.

American Medical Association Asthma Information Center - www.ama-assn.org/special/asthma/asthma.htm

Patient education, support groups, clinical guidelines, treatment issues, and up-to-date information about the latest news reports are provided here. The Asthma Information Center also has links to other sites recommended by AMA reviewers.

Doctor’s Guide to the Internet-Asthma - www.pslgroup.com/ASTHMA.HTM

This is an award-winning site that can be used by anyone, not just doctors. It is organized into five sections: medical news and alerts, asthma information, discussion and news groups, related sites, and staying current. It has support from many different pharmaceutical companies and covers many other health conditions in addition to asthma.

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- Lower Pioneer Valley in Springfield - 413-732-2009 or 1-800-789-3070
- Greater Western Massachusetts - 413-584-3880

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Quality Management Data on Line *(continued from page 2)*

and Utilization Project (HCUP) and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)

www.hcfa.gov/stats/stats.htm - Health Care Finance Agency

- economic and health service utilization data
- searchable databases include information on clinical practice expenses and Medicare and Medicaid utilization and expenditure data
- access to the searchable Public Use Files (PUFs) which includes data on health facility and provider surveys

www.who.ch/whosis - World Health Organization

- searchable database, and statistical and epidemiological data available through affiliated organizations

www.ahcpr.gov/qual - Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

- data management software programs and quality assessment resources
- double click on CONQUEST 1.1 to download a copy of the Computerized Needs-Oriented Quality Measurement Evaluation System. ■

Technical Assistance and Tools to Support the Use of Quality Management

www.ahcpr.gov/qual/ - Agency for Health Care Policy and Research

- development and testing of clinical guidelines
- case studies, best practices, quality management software and tools

www.ihl.org - Institute for Healthcare Improvement

- education, training programs and publications

www.facct.org - Foundation for Accountability

- publications and quality management tools

www.outcomes-trust.org - Medical Outcomes Trust

- publications, training programs and quality management tools

www.bayerquality.org - Bayer Quality Network

- education, training resources and publications including case studies, audio/video tape programs and leadership conferences
- Sharing Success in CQI - log on to this newsletter at

www.bayerquality.org/newsltr.htm

www.qserve.com/hcass - The Healthcare Quality Assessment Page

- applications of Malcolm Baldrige criteria to healthcare quality projects

There are only a few websites that exclusively address quality asthma and diabetes care:

www.diabetes.org/dqip.htm

www.ncqa.org/hedis/asthma.htm ■

Public Access to the Internet

There are many options available for free, online access. A listing of locations for free world wide web access is provided below. Local public schools and libraries are another option as they often have grants to help them develop technological capabilities and welcome community use. Academic institutions of higher learning may also be a choice for affiliated health professionals. If you have a connection with a school of medicine, public health, nursing, allied health, or other health professions training program, contact the Information Services Department or the relevant clinical department to inquire about free E-mail and Internet access.

Free public access sites

Regional Massachusetts Prevention Centers - appointments can be scheduled with a librarian

- Greater Boston - 617-451-0049
- Metro East in Central Square and Quincy - 617-441-0700 or 1-888-272-5155
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Update on the Networks

In transition, is the best way to describe the activities of Massachusetts Asthma Improvement Network and the Diabetes Quality Improvement Network (MAIN and DQIN). Working in partnership with Berkshire AHEC, the Office of Community Programs and the MassHealth Access Program at UMass Medical School, we have undertaken an assessment and development effort to make MAIN and DQIN more responsive to your needs.

Among this year's goals are:

- Creation of technical assistance resources (e.g. a mentor network) to facilitate the use of quality management processes at the provider level
- Design of a website
- Re-creation of the Advisory Board to better reflect Network membership
- Development of a membership package for participants

Gretchen Kinder of UMass Office of Community Programs will be conducting membership interviews in December/January to determine the types of information and resources you want to receive from MAIN/DQIN. If you are not among those interviewed and wish to be, please contact Gretchen at gkinder@nt.dma.state.ma.us or by telephone at 617-210-5636. Your comments are most welcome.

Berkshire AHEC
Area Health Education Center
725 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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Progress Notes

Fall 1998

MAIN/DQIN

*Massachusetts Asthma
Improvement Network/
Diabetes Quality
Improvement Network*



Announcements

December Meeting of MAIN and DQIN

Patient Care and Quality Improvement: Making the Connection is scheduled for December 8, 1998 at the Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center in Shrewsbury, MA, from 9:00-3:30. This combined meeting of the Networks was planned in response to requests for additional information on the application of quality improvement methodology in the design and delivery of patient education materials. The morning talks will offer various perspectives on the role of patient education and quality improvement approaches. During the afternoon there will be facilitated small group discussions led by practical experts who are directly involved in quality improvement projects. They will give a general overview about their project and use that as a spring board for further dialogue with the group. If you haven't received a brochure contact the AHEC Office at 413-447-2417.

Winter 1999 Progress Notes -

Understanding and Applying Guidelines and Standards for Quality Care

Articles are now being solicited for the March issue of Progress Notes. The deadline for submission is January 15, 1999. Please consider writing a short article about how your organization is accommodating to new or changing guidelines and standards.

We also are interested in your suggestions for future newsletter themes. Some of the ones we are considering include creating organizational change within your institution, coordinating quality care with community based organizations and cultural competence.

Finally, we would like to publish information of interest to other readers. If you have an announcement about upcoming meetings, resources, or information you would like to share with the members of MAIN and DQIN, please let us know.

Send all suggestions, comments, articles and announcements to Joanna Ezinga at the Berkshire AHEC - JoEzinga@aol.com, fax - 413-499-0370, phone - 413-447-2417.