

View from the front line: five favourite Web sites

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Five favourite Web sites for use in a GP practice.

Everyone has their favourite Web sites. Of course it depends on your needs, but many favourite Web sites pop up again and again when people in the same field exchange views. It is always good fun to swap favourite Web sites with colleagues and see what people are using. Sometimes, you can pick up a gem or be reassured to know that the Web sites you are using are in fact what others are using. I am a nearly full-time GP in a busy inner-city practice which I think is typical of an NHS primary care unit. So I thought I would share

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the Web sites that are useful to me in my day-to-day work. I have chosen four medical Web sites and one non-medical Web site. The latter is just to prove that all is not work and that there are wonderful non-medical uses for the Web.

While writing this article, I started to take note of which sites I used on a regular basis, though I did not take specific count of either the frequency of use or which sites I used most often. I chose the following five sites on the basis of usefulness and my own regular use, and also my trust in the content and functioning of these sites. One needs to spend a lot of time using a site before you can give it such a degree of trust. Sometimes this can take many months, if not years, of regular visiting before such a high level of trust is achieved.

Navigability of a site is also important though I don't think it is crucial – after all, if you are a regular visitor to a site and you like it, you should be able to find your way around with ease (good navigability). However, if the navigability of the site is awful, it is much less likely you will come back. As far as I am concerned, content is

much more important than navigability. However, that is a personal opinion and not based on evidence. Anyway here are my top five!

Google <www.google.co.uk/>

Perhaps no great surprise, after all it is one of the Internet 'giants' and a popular and highly respected search engine. A quick search on a topic produces information that can be rapidly gathered and assessed. Of course such a broad, unfocused search finds high-

quality sites and lesser quality sites mixed in with each other. However, there are ways round this. I sometimes use other Google services such as the advanced search <www.google.co.uk/advanced_search?hl=en> to increase my options. This can also be found

Say no to 0870 phone numbers <www.saynoto0870.com/>

There are plenty of Web sites that not only save time but can save you cash as well, and this site can save you cash.

from the right-hand side of the search box, simply by clicking 'advanced search'. There is also Google Scholar <<http://scholar.google.com/>> which preferentially searches academic literature. Again, this is a useful service from Google.

Prodigy (now Clinical Knowledge Summaries) <www.cks.library.nhs.uk/>

This is a well-known NHS service but the thrust of the site is actually slowly changing and evolving (see <www.cks.library.nhs.uk/help/about_cks/>). This is essentially a knowledge resource

which is full of practical advice and information about common topics found in primary care. There are numerous topics covered and it is easy to navigate around the site and quickly drill down to the point of interest. I have used this site many, many times over a number of years and constantly recommend it to colleagues. It is superb, very factual but easy to read and practical. Even better, it is free and there is no need for any registration – anyone can use it.

Patient UK <www.patient.co.uk/>

This is a site that I probably use every day – it is truly outstanding. It is a massive repository of patient information leaflets which are well written, accurate and very patient focused. They are an excellent adjunct to a consultation. Using the site's in-house search engine, it is very simple to locate a patient information leaflet rapidly, print it out and give it to the patient. I reckon I

can do this in about 20 seconds. The feedback I get from patients is very positive and the quality and presentation of the information is so reliable. I strongly trust all the content from the site. There is more to this site than patient information leaflets. There is also information about patient self-help organisations and a sprinkling of patient experience comments as well as more health professional orientated material.

BMJ <www.bmj.com/>

There is no doubt that the *British Medical Journal* is a hugely important

He@lth Information on the Internet

medical journal that covers general medicine. Combine its content into a Web site and you have an outstanding reference source. The Web site has recently been redesigned and without doubt is a classier act than previously – and the previous version was excellent! Navigation is simplicity itself and there is a vast collection of excellent material available via a few clicks from the mouse. This site is not just a journal published in an online environment. The Web site cleverly expands the range of the journal. The downside is that the site is subscription only. However, there is still a fair amount of free content to be had.

Say no to 0870 phone numbers

www.saynoto0870.com/

Though I have covered medical sites, there is more to life both on and off the Web than learning about medicine. There are plenty of Web sites that not only save time but can save you cash as well, and this site can save you cash. This can give an alternative freephone or an ordinary geographical phone number when a more expensive 0870 phone number

is publicised. Think of the time you have been stuck in a queue on a phone line, trying to contact a company or an organisation on an 0870 number, and running up a significant phone bill. This site can help find cheaper alternatives, assuming that the company's details are in the database. A simple search can quickly call up an alternative and cheaper phone number.

Nature Network

<http://network.nature.com/>

'Nature Network is the online meeting place for... scientists to gather, talk and find out about the latest scientific news and events.' Use is free but registration is required. The initiative is being run by the publishers of *Nature*.

Pain Talk

www.pain-talk.org.uk/

Pain Talk is the national discussion forum and community for UK healthcare professionals with an interest in acute, chronic, or palliative, pain management. It is run by healthcare workers, on a 'not-for-profit' basis, and provides an online venue where individuals can share their experiences, ask questions, request help, publicise events, etc. Pain Talk has been nominated for the New Media Awards 2007 in the category of Information and Openness. The New Media Awards are run by The New Statesman, in association with Atos Origin

www.newstatesman.com/nma/nma2007/.

What is Web 2.0?

www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/techwatch/tsw0701bword.doc

Paul Anderson, *What is Web 2.0? Ideas, technologies and implications for education*, JISC Technology and Standards Watch, February 2007. 'This TechWatch report was commissioned to investigate the substance behind the hyperbole "surrounding Web 2.0" and to report on the implications this may have for the UK Higher and Further Education sector... The report argues that by separating out the discussion of Web technologies (ongoing Web development overseen by the W3C), from the more recent applications and services (social software), and attempts to understand the manifestations and adoption of these services (the "big ideas"), decision makers will find it easier to understand and act on the strategic implications of Web 2.0.'

What is popular on Wikipedia and why?

www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue12_4/spoerri2/

Anselm Spoerri, *What is Popular on Wikipedia and Why?*, *First Monday*, April 2007, 12(4).

This paper describes research into the popularity of topics on Wikipedia. The 100 most visited Wikipedia pages for the months of September 2006 to January 2007 were identified and categorised into topics. Entertainment scored 43% whilst science (which included medical topics) scored only 6%.

Primary Care Genetics Society

www.pcgs.org.uk/

The Primary Care Genetics Society (PCGS) is a new organisation of medical professionals whose aim is to provide support and information on developments in the science of genetics to primary care professionals. Their Web site provides information on the society, its executive members and information, in the form of presentations, from conferences and links to relevant documents, guidelines and Web sites. Please note that some sections of this site are still under development (as of March 2007)