

**THE OFFICE**

**Putting the Web to Use in Practice**

I am a strong believer in using the resources we have so readily at hand to inform our patients. The advent of the Internet has brought a wealth of the latest medical information and guidelines and to inform our patients. Every exam room in our office now has access to the Web and I refer to it during nearly every patient visit. Here’s a quick look at sites that I’m currently using:

**Social bookmarking**
- With the explosion of social networking sites in the last few years, there has been a corresponding increase in sites, such as delicious.com, that allow you to explore and evaluate online resources in a collective way. These bookmarking sites can run inside your browser. When you see a site you like, with one key stroke it can be added to your bookmarked list, which is then automatically organized by the frequency and prominence of keywords. The list that’s compiled when you create bookmarks can then be easily shared with colleagues and you have access to their lists. If I’ve got a question relating to alternative medicine, for example, I’ll turn to the bookmarks of a colleague who is a specialist in that area because I know he has already vetted them for me. All of us are smarter than any one of us.

**Patient Education:** If a patient needs more information, there is a wealth of information that can be sent home. A search of the Medscape site that I use for my daily practice is referenced by the NLM and provides reliable, well-written patient handouts.

Despite the fact that 54% of our residency program’s patients are on Medicare, a large number have access to a computer to look at these sites. Through our hospital and residency program affiliate, I have access to the www.upToDate.com, which offers a lot of information for free. Another site that offers information for free is www.emedicine.com.

Well-worn paths are best. When I’m looking for a high-level overview or when I can’t remember a specific fact, I’ll go to www.fennotebook.com, which offers a lot of information for free. Another site that offers information for free is www.studentConsult.com.

Ah, the Web. It’s good to know what’s out there, but as a busy clinician who wants to spend less time tracking relevant sites, it’s easy to get caught up in the maze of Web sites. I refer to it during nearly every patient visit. Here’s a quick look at sites that I often use:

**Finding specific information**
- When I’m searching for information on a particular topic, I use a few key phrases. First, I’ll go to the Web and look for websites that are specifically directed at family practice. Second, I’ll go to the sites that are formed or sponsored by medical schools and governmental agencies.

**The Postgraduate Medical Journal**
- The Postgraduate Medical Journal is a good source of information on the latest developments in medicine and provides a summary of the key points of each issue.

**MedlinePlus**
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