This issue features

1. Information Websites for Patients with Stomas
A BRENT | 2. Head and neck cancer reconstruction
J RIMMER, A SINGH, P BANWELL |
|---|--|

Selected internet viewings

Welcome to the *Annals'* regular review of what's happening on the web, what your patients are reading and what caught our eye this month.

If you wish to review web sites in your area of expertise, please E-mail your completed reviews directly to me, **Nick Cheshire**, at nickcheshire@blueyonder.co.uk. Authors must NOT submit their reviews more than once.

The editors regret that they cannot enter into correspondence with authors. It may be some months before your submission is reviewed.

Information websites for patients with stomas

A BRENT

SHO in General Surgery, Poole General Hospital, Poole, UK

Bupa Website — Stoma care

www.hcd2.bupa.co.uk/fact_sheets/html/Stoma_care.html

Aimed at pre-operative patients, this site is concise and provides a core detail for those people who have no prior knowledge of what a stoma is. There are three clear diagrams showing surgical formation of a stoma but no pictures of what they look like once formed. The 'complications' section does address psychological problems but focuses little on physical complications. It even states that 'one can expect to lead a normal complication-free life once the stoma is formed' and 'prolapse or stenosis are 'simple' problems that can easily be corrected surgically'. Common problems such as hernia, skin excoriation and reversal are not touched upon. The complications on a patient's consent form would be more numerous than the ones here. Best avoided as it gives patients unreasonably high expectations.*

Ileostomy/Colostomy

www.surgerydoor.co.uk/medical_conditions/Indices/I/ileostomy.htm

This site is simple and quite rightly assumes that not everyone knows what the colon or rectum are precisely. Bracketed translation of medical terms into colloquial English such as 'back passage' keeps this site patient-friendly. It gives good detail regarding pre-operative bowel preparation and nil-by-mouth guidelines. The intra-operative section gives details of lines and drips used peri-operatively and only misses out the possibility of an epidural. The list of complications is thorough but concise. The question of sexual dysfunction is addressed honestly. The last section advises patients to tell their families what to expect on the first postoperative visit, in order to avoid the shocked looks from the end of the bed. Overall, an excellent site only lacking in pictures.****

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerhelp.org.uk/help/default.asp?page=2924

This is a well-designed page with links from 'if you need a colostomy' to 'coping with a colostomy'. Relationships, sexual function and sports/work are all covered. There is no peri-operative detail covered and the site lacks pictures. A useful link to the British Colostomy Association shows a variety of stoma appliances available to buy. Stoma complications are not covered. A brief and well-designed site, easy to navigate. A further useful link to 'bowel cancer organisations' gives names and contact details for support groups and national organisations.***

Cancer Council New South Wales, Sexuality for People with a Stoma

www.cancercouncil.com.au/editorial.asp?pageid=1095

This Australian site is mainly concerned with sexuality for people with a stoma, a subject skirted around on all the British websites. It is easy to navigate and has nice colour pages with information set out in table form, making the text easier to read and digest. Its practical advice regarding what you can physically do to minimise stoma difficulties during sex is frank and thorough. Although everything you need to know about stomas and sex is well covered here, the site also introduces the basic definition of a stoma and reminds patients that the stoma nurse as an important resource available to them. It is the only site I have read advising on changes to expect during pregnancy and reliability of the pill when gut absorption is reduced. The best site reviewed for the young and young-at-heart.*****

University of Pittsburg Medical Center

<http://patienteducation.upmc.com/Pdf/StomaCare.pdf>

An American site for patients who are newly postoperative. It has a single photograph of what a stoma looks like. The page is very good for detailing potential complications in simple list form but does not address treatment of these complications. It teaches the patient to look out for symptoms of food blockage and gives instruction to return to hospital if fever or other such symptoms develop immediately postoperatively. This site would be useful as a leaflet for patients to read before they go home but not very beneficial as an overall stoma care site. Psychological issues are not mentioned. A site that one could live without.*

The British Colostomy Association

<http://www.bcass.org.uk/>

The BCA website is run by a nationally registered charity. Registration is free and, once registered, members receive a free newsletter and can request a variety of literature. The introduction page gives details of free phone, letter and E-mail help/support lines and the stoma forum enables members to ask questions and advice from other members.

The support link enables the reader to search for local support groups in their area. This site is useful for patients who want to order information but details of stoma care are not available to read in an on-line form. An excellent website but no instant access to facts.***

The Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Support Group

www.the-ia.org.uk

The IA is also a registered charity and sends its members quarterly journals. It arranges members meetings throughout the country and its search and help pages allow easy navigation across a variety of information pages. There is not a huge body of text to read on-line but much like the BCA website, members can arrange meetings with local support groups and register for the free literature. This site is for both those colectomy patients who require long-term support, and those who just like the ability to use the search facility to answer a question on-line.**

Head and neck cancer reconstruction

J RIMMER, A SINGH, P BANWELL

Head & Neck Unit, Royal Marsden Hospital, London, UK

Emedicine Online Textbook Of Otolaryngology & Facial Plastic Surgery

www.emedicine.com/ent/HEAD_AND_NECK_ONCOLOGY.htm

www.emedicine.com/ent/RECONSTRUCTIVE_SURGERY.htm

This free on-line textbook is peer-reviewed and covers all aspects of the different head and neck cancers, from incidence and aetiology through to treatment. It is well laid-out and easy to navigate, having been broken down into specific tumours and/or surgical procedures (e.g. malignant laryngeal tumours, management of the NO neck, conservation laryngeal surgery). The relevant anatomy is discussed in some detail, although it suffers from a lack of diagrams and pictures. Specific areas of reconstruction are described (e.g. cheek reconstruction, mandibular reconstruction), with a variety of suggested options. A more general overview of free flaps used in head and neck reconstruction (e.g. tissue transfer — radial forearm, tissue transfer — lateral thigh) is very useful. For junior trainees, there are also details of more simple procedures such as skin grafts and rotation flaps. There is a full bibliography at the end of each 'chapter', with direct links to the relevant reference. Overall, an excellent site for trainees of any level.*****

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/types/head-and-neck

This US National Institutes of Health site provides excellent information on all aspects of head and neck cancer from its causes and prevention to recent trials and relevant literature. It discusses treatment, including surgical options and reconstructions, in three main groups (laryngeal, lip & oral cavity, and oropharyngeal). Each of these has a 'patient' link and a 'health professional' link, with very different information and detail. The patient sections are clear and fairly comprehensive, while the health professional sections cover

different stages of the disease, with treatment options for each, as well as recurrence. There are links to references, as well as to general cancer sites and support services for patients.****

Foundation for Reconstructive Plastic Surgery

www.frps.org/HeadNeck.htm

An educational site by a non-profit organisation with a 'mission to promote excellence' — that may be a bit hopeful, but this is a well-structured, easy to navigate site with no adverts. It covers extra-oral head and neck reconstruction (e.g. ear, nose, scalp and skull) and oropharyngeal reconstruction (jaw and throat). Each section describes the basic outline of the surgical procedure, complete with helpful intra-operative photographs. Certainly useful for junior trainees wanting an idea of what is involved in complex reconstructions, although it is a bit limited. There are few external links but the one to *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* (journal) is helpful.***

Microsurgeon

www.microsurgeon.org/head_and_neck.htm

This gives a very simple overview of the indications for reconstruction including functional issues. It goes into specifics for mandibular reconstruction and oesophageal reconstruction, describing a variety of osteocutaneous flaps for the former and jejunal grafting for the latter. The basic surgical techniques are described, complete with diagrams and photographs. Anatomy is not discussed. This site would be most useful for junior trainees, and could even be a useful adjunct when describing the procedures to patients.**

Restoration of Appearance and Function Trust (RAFT)

www.raft.ac.uk/plastics/patients/head_and_neck_cancer.html

A patient information site linked to Mount Vernon Hospital's Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery Unit. There are sections on specific types of skin cancer as well as head and neck cancer. It discusses causes and surgical treatment, with some 'before' and 'after' photographs. This site particularly emphasises the difficulties faced in head and neck reconstruction as a result of the many complex functions that we aim to preserve. The language is kept simple but not patronising. A useful tool for patients.***

Medline Plus

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/headandneckcancer.html

No, not a scientific journal search engine but a patient-orientated site from the US National Library and National Institutes of Health. Certainly a much fuller site than anything that this side of the Atlantic can offer, there isn't much a patient might want to know that isn't in here somewhere! It contains overviews of head and neck cancer in general; specific conditions, their diagnosis and different treatments; and rehabilitation (mainly focusing on speech restoration after laryngectomy but also mentioning post-reconstruction problems such as swallowing difficulties). Less relevant to our patients are the directories (e.g. Finding your oral and maxillofacial surgeon), but the majority of this site is well worth a look.****