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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, **Richard Gibbs**, at r.gibbs@imperial.ac.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.

Sentinel node biopsy

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<http://breast-cancer-research.com/content/3/2/104>

Excellent review that not only highlights the history and evidence for sentinel node biopsy (SNB), but discusses the technical limitations, practical hurdles and accuracy of the procedure in patients with breast cancer. The site is pragmatic and well supported with its evidence base and reference list. This is a comprehensive and readily readable introduction to the subject. It is useful for clinicians and patients alike and delivers a good platform of knowledge.****

<http://www2.mdanderson.org/depts/oncolog/articles/03/9-sep/9-03-1.html>

This is an excellent introduction to the theory behind SNB, highlighting in a step-by-step fashion the patient pathway through the whole process. It explains the current applications in malignant melanoma and breast cancer, briefly introduces the procedure and highlights areas of controversy, unanswered research questions and areas of development within SNB. It is well written and is easily intelligible; however, the site lacks illustrations and operative procedural detail.****

<http://www.melanoma.sgul.ac.uk/snb.htm>

This is the official website of the UK's malignant melanoma centre at St George's Hospital in London. It is useful for clinicians wanting to gain insight into the operative stages of SNB. The site is easily navigated and clearly illustrates with photography the steps of the procedure.

This is also an excellent site for patients awaiting sentinel node biopsy and/or lymphadenectomy. Useful links to cancer help organisations are included. It includes examples of clinical lymphoscintigrams.****

<http://www.cancernews.com/category.asp?Cat=3&AID=202>

This is a succinct, patient-oriented site. It is informative, structured along the decision-making process and explains exactly what a patient will experience during the procedure. It offers useful information for the informed consent process and explains cautionary notes on patient selection, whilst informing about procedural adjuncts such as drains and physiotherapy. Its focus on breast cancer is to be somewhat limiting.***

http://www.mpip.org/tools/stager/ajcc_ref.html

This is a concise description of the way the TNM classification and AJCC cancer staging systems interlink for malignant melanoma. It illustrates how SNB impacts on staging malignancy. Although there is still conjecture over the usefulness of SNB in affecting morbidity or mortality, particularly in malignant melanoma, the clinical staging would be more useful if linked to 5-year survival figures, allowing better informed patient counselling.**

<http://www.emedicinehealth.com/articles/70039-1.asp>

A simplified overview directed at patients, with particular reference to breast cancer. This site highlights patient groups where SNB may be relatively or completely contra-indicated. It is limited in its usefulness, which is disappointing for a usually popular web resource.**

Bowel cancer

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www.cancer.gov

An interesting site from the US National Cancer Institute which is part of the US Department of Health. It is of use to patients as the information related to various aspects of bowel cancer is well presented with a clear layout combined with good organisation of search results. Professionals and surgical trainees will also find it useful as it offers evidence-based reviews on screening, prevention and genetics of colorectal cancer and a formal ranking system helps the reader judge the strength of evidence reported. This is an excellent site with concise and comprehensive information on bowel cancer.****

*****CONSIDER BUYING SHARES *****TELL YOUR FRIENDS
***MAY BE USEFUL **LOOK IF YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO
*BEST AVOIDED

SELECTED INTERNET VIEWINGS

www.beatingbowelcancer.org

This is a UK charity website, primarily patient-orientated which is easy to navigate with a high speed of loading the pages. It provides basic knowledge and information to patients about the disease, symptoms and treatment options and is probably a good starting point for patients wishing to do some further research. Whilst it is quite visually appealing, the section devoted to provide further links is limited, especially with regards to international sites. This site is simplistic but provides useful information to patients and relatives.**

www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk

Here is another UK charity site offering information aimed at educating the public and those concerned about bowel cancer. This is a very basic site and patients would probably need to seek information from elsewhere. The overall layout is uninspired and the home page is confusing as it is littered with adverts on how to win tickets for TV shows, football matches and other functions. It is rather disappointing to see that there are no links to other sites.*

www.cancerbacup.org.uk

This UK charity site is primarily aimed at patients although there is a link for health professionals. It provides detailed information on all types of cancer. The section on bowel cancer offers thorough explanations in language that is suitable for the reader with no medical background. There are many good sections on the site and one of the best features is that information is provided in 12 different languages with a reference to a free telephone number for advice. Overall, an excellent website containing an adequate amount of information.

www.besttreatments.co.uk

This is a website produced by the *BMJ* aiming to provide patients and healthcare professionals with evidence-based information on medical conditions and their treatment. The content of this site is informative, educational and well presented. The text is characterised by clarity and simplicity. Overall, the boring design and unimaginative format is well compensated by a sufficient number of references for both clinicians and patients. A site worth visiting.***

Tracheostomy

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Aaron's Tracheostomy Page

<http://www.tracheostomy.com/>

An excellent, US-certified health site written by a registered nurse (last updated February 2006), which provides a wealth of educational and comprehensive information targeting patients with tracheostomies and their carers. The topics covered include concise and accurate explanations of the types of tracheostomies including the surgical procedure, complications, tracheostomy care and practical issues with

excellent clear illustrations provided. This easy-to-navigate site also facilitates patient-to-patient networking and support via a forum, provision of support groups and opportunities to attend conferences. Overall, a highly recommended site for the unwary patient or carer presenting detailed information on tracheostomies and an insight into lives affected by them.****

MedlinePlus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002955.htm>

A service of the US National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health, this patient-orientated extensive encyclopaedia can be approached via its A-Z index of medical topics. The page on tracheostomy is disappointing; it discusses briefly, and with limited (but reliable) factual content, the indications, description (percutaneous method not included) and risks after surgery with equally disappointing illustrations. The website itself is worth visiting as other topics are well written and it provides links to most if not all US organisations.**

EMedicine

<http://www.emedicine.com/ent/topic356.htm>

Providing instant access to over 6500 peer-reviewed clinical review articles, this extensive, comprehensive and easy-to-navigate US website is aimed at healthcare professionals. Launched in 1996, it claims to provide the largest and most current clinical knowledge-base covering 59 specialities for healthcare professionals. Its subsidiary website, e-medicine consumer health, provides patient information. Overall, most topics are covered in great detail. The article on tracheostomy comes under otolaryngology/facial plastic surgery going into oral medicine/otolaryngology. The layout is clear and organised; its contents well detailed, consistent and reliable, including anatomy, indications and contra-indications, treatment, complications, outcome and prognosis. The overall comprehension is to a standard for the trainee, not the patient. A medical dictionary is available though not clearly advertised. Pictures are available but access to these requires paid subscription. Overall, a good web site but orientated towards the trainee. It does state that articles are regularly updated although this particular one was updated in 2002.***

MedicineNet

<http://www.medicinenet.com/tracheostomy/article.htm>

This US webpage, written by physicians, claims 'easy to read, in-depth authoritative medical information'. Launched in 1996, it provides a free interactive service directed at the patient. Although pages are cluttered with adverts, easy access to topics is via an index. Contents are written clearly and in simple terms, the layout being well organised. A medical dictionary is also available with clear illustrations. The discussion on tracheostomy includes the relevant indications but states the rarer complications such as airway obstruction, need for blood transfusion, damage to larynx with resultant permanent change and need for further and more aggressive surgery, a somewhat daunting prospect for the patient. It also lacks detail on the surgical procedure itself. The page links to a 'tracheostomy center' revealing doctors'