

## Consumer health information

Compiled by Susan Murray

### Canadian Health Network (CHN) update

Two new affiliates have joined CHN ([www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)):

- The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) ([www.naho.ca](http://www.naho.ca)) as the Aboriginal affiliate
- Vancouver Public Library, formerly the Western Operating Centre, took on the role of the violence prevention affiliate

Look for a totally revamped health promotion section. The health promotion affiliate is reorganizing and updating the resources in the health promotion and determinants of health sections.

A hot-off-the-press brochure for complementary and alternative health is now available! Please contact me ([smurray@torontopubliclibrary.ca](mailto:smurray@torontopubliclibrary.ca)) if you would like copies for your organization and outreach efforts.

### Collection development

#### *Library Journal*

You now have to subscribe to *Library Journal* to access the contents online, except for the current issue (temporarily unavailable with the redesign of the site). However, many public libraries and library schools carry this journal.

#### Collection guide

Weaver E. A Good Night's Sleep. *Libr J.* 2005 Jan:65–7.

This article contains resources on sleep disorders and how to have restful sleep.

Bibel B. Best Consumer Health Books of 2004. *Libr J.* 2005 May 1:54–7.

Barbara Bibel, reference librarian at the Oakland Public Library, provides an annotated list of a total of 24 highly recommended books in the areas of cancer, caregiving, children's health, drugs, elder care, emergency medicine, general medicine, personal narrative, weight loss, and women's health.

### Consumer and Patient Health Information Section of the Medical Library Association (CAPHIS)

Don't forget to check *Consumer Connections*, the CAPHIS newsletter, for reviews of new resources. The April/June 2005 issue is available at <http://caphis.mlanet.org/newsletter/21n2ConsConnect2005.html>.

### New Web sites

#### [www.patientinform.org](http://www.patientinform.org)

In spring 2005, three leading US voluntary health organizations joined a group of scholarly and medical publishers to launch patientINFORM, a site that provides patients, caregivers and the general public with free access to up-to-date, reliable research about specific diseases (initially cancer, diabetes, and heart disease). Consumers will have the ability to read the latest original research articles (free full-text) published in medical and scientific journals, find assistance in interpreting the information, and access additional materials on the Web sites of participating voluntary health organizations.

#### [www.HolisticHealthResearch.ca](http://www.HolisticHealthResearch.ca)

According to recent studies, nearly half of Canadians have used some form of "complementary and alternative health care" to supplement the conventional medical care they receive. When asked, these Canadians said they used complementary treatments like vitamin supplements, herbal remedies, and massage therapy because they believe these therapies help maintain their health and well-being, prevent future serious illness, and treat chronic diseases. However, it's difficult for consumers to find and evaluate the evidence for complementary and alternative health therapies and practices.

Launched in November 2004, the Holistic Health Research Foundation of Canada is Canada's first and only national registered charitable organization dedicated to funding research, public awareness, and professional training in complementary and alternative health care. This organization seeks to find the answers to many of the questions that are still unanswered about different complementary products and therapies being used and endeavours to get that information into the hands of people and health professionals where it can potentially help improve, extend, or even save lives.

#### <http://chipig.ca/coll.html>

The Consumer Health Information Providers' Interest Group (CHIPIG), formerly the Consumer Health Information Interest Group, has been meeting since 1998 with representatives from consumer health information (CHI) centres in Toronto, Hamilton, and Kitchener. Members have held quarterly meetings at each others' centres and sponsored a tour of three hospital-based CHI centres and a reception at the CHLA / ABSC 2005 Conference.

CHIPIG has a listserv that you can subscribe to (see link on homepage) and recently launched a Web site that cur-

rently includes basic information about the goals and mandate of CHIPIG, as well as links to the member organizations. CHIPIG would like to broaden its membership and welcomes new members. Please contact Susan Himel (shimel@thc.on.ca) if you are interested in joining CHIPIG.

### Medical librarian blog

Denise Koufogiannakis, John W. Scott Health Sciences Library in Edmonton, has created a blog called Librarians' Rx (<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/mt/blog/librariansrx/>). It contains postings on a wide variety of topics of interest to Canadian health sciences librarians. Currently, the topics include the following: collections issues; conferences copyright; evidence-based librarianship (EBL); evidence-based medicine (EBM); events and announcements; heroes; in the news; information needs; professional reading; resources; searching; teaching and learning; and technology. It is updated regularly and has a searchable archive dating back to February 2005.

### CHI readings

Scott GW, Scott HM, Auld TS. Consumer access to health information on the internet: health policy implications. *Aust New Zealand Health Policy*. 2005;2:13.

Little is known about who accesses health-related information on the Internet and how it is used in New Zealand. The aims of this research are to determine the nature of the health information sought, how respondents use the informa-

tion, how helpful they perceive the information to be, and the self-assessed value of such information.

The results of this research could assist providers of health information via the Internet to tailor their Web sites to better suit users' needs. A valuable public health policy initiative would be to provide an improved New Zealand health information Web site containing information on how to evaluate data sourced from the World Wide Web and links to a range of useful and trustworthy health information sites.

There are a number of interesting articles in recent issues of the *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet* (9/3 and 9/4 are prepublication):

- P.O.W.E.R. surfers: bridging the digital divide to quality consumer health information. Toni E. Janik and Joann L. Chateau. 2005;9/4:1–10.
- Health and medical information on and off the Internet: what part can and do public libraries play? Peter V. Picerno. 2005;9/4:11–25.
- Collaborating with patient care units to provide consumer health information. Carol Galganski, Ann Phillips, and Christine Ross 2005;9/3:25–35.
- Consumer health informatics research: implications for consumers, health information professionals, and researchers. Gerald (Jerry) Perry and Stephanie Weldon. 2005;9/2:1–10.
- Natural medicines comprehensive database. 2005;9/2:77–85. Various articles on these pages provide well-documented, up-to-date information regarding the use of herbal medicines.