

Consumer health information

Compiled by Susan Murray

Top 10 Canadian consumer health Web sites

We finally have a Canadian top 10 list! In April 2006, messages soliciting suggestions for the top 10 consumer health Web sites were posted on librarian and health promotion listservs, such as CANMEDLIB, THLA, CHIPIG, CASLIS, OPLA, and Click4Health. More details can be found on the Consumer Health Information Providers Group (CHIPIG) site at www.chipig.ca (see more information below) Also, an article will be submitted for an upcoming issue of the *Journal of the Canadian Health Libraries Association*. Here are the top 10 Canadian consumer health Web sites:

- (1) Canadian Health Network
(www.canadian-health-network.ca)
- (2) Women's Health Matters
(<http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca>)
- (3) Dietitians of Canada
(<http://www.dietitians.ca>)
- (4) Canada Health Portal
(http://chp-pcs.gc.ca/CHP/index_e.jsp)
- (5) Health Care Information Resources
(<http://hsl.mcmaster.ca/tomflem/top.html>)
- (6) sexualityandu.ca
(www.sexualityandu.ca)
- (7) AboutKidsHealth
(<http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/>)
- (8) Passeporte Santé
(<http://www.passeportsante.net/>)
- (9) Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario)
(<http://www.ontario.cmha.ca/>)
- (10) BC Health Guide
(www.bchealthguide.org)

Consumer Health Information Providers Interest Group (CHIPIG)

The Consumer Health Information Providers Interest Group (CHIPIG) is a voluntary association of persons who share an interest in the provision of health information to the general public and is an affiliate of the Canadian Health Libraries Association / Association des bibliothèques de la santé du Canada. Anyone with an interest in consumer health information is welcome to join. Contact Kimberley Meighan at kimberley.meighan@sickkids.ca for details. For more information about CHIPIG, check the Web site at www.chipig.ca.

Collection development

Bibel B. Best consumer health books of 2005. *Libr J*. 2006 May 1:58–60.

This article provides annotations for 19 notable consumer health books from 2005. Several books commemorate the 50th anniversary of the development of the polio vaccine.

In the same May 1 issue of *Library Journal*, "Fads be-gone!" (pp. 54–56) authors Williams and Kuzyk characterize 2006 as the age of common sense in consumer health publishing. The authors discuss books that have realistic and emotional approaches to deal with health conditions such as diabetes, dieting, exercise, and pregnancy. There is also a trend to creating books by strong authority figures for consumers who are becoming more educated and are more discriminating in their choice of health information.

The 2006 Reference Supplement to *Library Journal* includes forthcoming books on consumer health and medicine; they are listed at the end of the science and technology subject listings (<http://www.libraryjournal.com/index.asp?layout=articlePrint&articleid=CA6288818>). In addition, *Library Journal* has collection development essays and features health topics at least once a year. The 15 January 2006 issue featured men's health (<http://www.libraryjournal.com/index.asp?layout=articlePrint&articleid=CA6298438>).

Pew Internet & American Life Project – Finding answers online in sickness and in health

http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/183/report_display.asp

Recent research from the Pew Internet & American Life Project shows that, as more Americans come online, more rely on the Internet for important health information. Fully 58% of those who found the Internet to be crucial or important during a loved one's recent health crisis say the single most important source of information was something they found online.

Authors wanted!

The Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet provides the table of contents for the quarterly issues. In addition to feature articles, there are book reviews and several columns: Web Sitings (which I edit), Consumer Health Searcher, Alternative and Complementary Therapies, and the Editor's

Select Sites. Upcoming Web Sitings columns feature the Canadian Health Network (10/2), and AboutKidsHealth! an initiative launched by the Hospital for Sick Children (10/3).

I am always looking for authors for the Web Sitings column; it's an in-depth examination of a Web site of your choice. If you are interested in authoring a column, please contact me at smurray@torontopubliclibrary.ca. The table of contents, with generous annotations, is available on the Haworth Press site at <http://www.haworthpress.com/store/product.asp?sku=J381>. Click on "Complete contents for current & past issues".

Consumer health information (CHI) readings

Medical Library Association (www.mlanet.org)

MLA News, a publication of the Medical Library Association (MLA), has a quarterly CHI column and often features topics relevant to consumer health. However, while the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* is available at no cost, you must be a member to access the *MLA News*. Recent columns have featured companion animals (January 2006) and partnerships (May 2006). MLA has also prepared "Deciphering Medspeak" brochures on breast cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Each brochure includes a glossary and recommended Web sites (<http://www.mlanet.org/resources/medspeak/index.html>).

CAPHIS (<http://caphis.mlanet.org>)

Consumer Connections, the newsletter of the Consumer and Patient Health Information Section of MLA, is available on the CAPHIS site. Volume 22(1) includes short feature articles, a range of book reviews, and information on CAPHIS programs at MLA 2006 in Phoenix (<http://caphis.mlanet.org/newsletter/22n1ConsConnect2006.html>).

Powell JA, Lowe P, Griffiths FE, Thorogood M. A critical analysis of the literature on the Internet and consumer health information. *J Telemed Telecare*. 2005;11 Suppl. 1:41-3.

While there have been many articles on measuring the quality of online information, this study explores how consumers are actually using the Internet for health care.

McMullan M. Patients using the Internet to obtain health information: how this affects the patient-health professional relationship. *Patient Educ Couns*. 2006 Jan 4; [Epub ahead of print].

The review showed that the majority of health-related Internet searches by patients are for specific medical conditions. They are carried out by the patient (1) before the clinical encounter to seek information to manage their own health care independently and (or) to decide whether they need professional help; (2) after the clinical encounter for reassurance or because of dissatisfaction with the amount of detailed information provided by the health professional during the encounter.

Kivits J. Informed patients and the internet: a mediated context for consultations with health professionals. *J Health Psychol*. 2006 Mar;11(2):269-82.

This article investigates how consumers' use of the Internet to find health information may affect their relationship with health professionals. Interviewees emphasize the primary role of the doctor-patient relationship for delivering health and medical information, their Internet searches complementing rather than opposing professional expertise.