

■ REVIEWS OF WEB SITES

James C. Eisenach, M.D., Editor

The National Library of Medicine PubMed

URL:<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>

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Since 1971, the United States National Library of Medicine has been collecting an electronic database of papers published in the medical literature. This database, known as *Medline*, currently has bibliographic entries from more than 8.8 million papers in 3,800 journals spanning 30 yr. Initially, this database was accessible only to professional librarians and only for a fee. The interface was arcane and required use of a specific "MeSH" vocabulary of search terms for best results. Over the years, access to Medline has become a bit more open, and subscriptions were available from third party providers, but medical providers and researchers still did not have universal access. As of June 1997, this has changed. Medline is now freely accessible over the internet with a very simple to use web browser-based interface.

Quality of Information

Medline is composed of the greater fraction of the available, worldwide serial medical literature. Most papers that fall into the category of original publications (excluding, for example, Letters and Case Reports) are provided with English language abstracts. Although it often takes 2-4 months after publication for a paper to be indexed, a new companion database known as *PreMedLine* provides early citation information until the paper is cited in the main database.

Search Capability

PubMed provided several levels of search capability. At its simplest, the user can just provide a key word or two. The capability to search by bibliographic record fields (*i.e.*, Author Name, Title Word, MeSH (Keyword), Journal Name, and so on) and with Boolean operators like AND, OR, NOT is also provided for more advanced users. A detailed description of search syntax and available record fields is provided at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/syntax.html>.

Summary

For medical professionals who need access to the world's current peer-reviewed literature on medicine including anesthesiology and its related subspecialties, this one site is reason enough to get a connection to the internet.

Reviewer

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