GP Notebook

www.gpnotebook.co.uk

This website is primarily designed with the needs of general practitioners (GPs) in mind, and written by a variety of specialists, ranging from paediatrics to accident and emergency.

The key to this website’s usefulness is its search capabilities: just type in a keyword and the search engine will pull out all that pertains, even loosely, to it. The text itself is useful and written at the level of general practice, in that it gives a quick and accessible, no-nonsense approach to describing the condition, its treatment, sequelae and treatment. I have therefore found it useful as a rapid reference tool in my practice when advising employers (and indeed sometimes patients) of the seriousness of any particular condition, its prognosis and the treatment modalities used. An encyclopaedia it is not: nor does it have the power of a SIGN guideline or Medline search—its strengths lie in the ability with which I have been able to speedily access simple useful information without trawling through pages of text in a reference book or picking the most likely abstracts from a Medline search, both of which would be impractical in my normal clinical practice.

The contents, however, appear to be reasonably up to date, and are well referenced. The design of the website makes it easy to use, particularly the search engine: in fact, I found I preferred to use the search engine rather than the index, which seemed to me to be harder to use. Its overall design is fairly utilitarian but clear. On the right-hand side of the information pages there are copious links to other web pages.

Although there is little direct reference to the field of occupational medicine itself, our specialties share common ground in so many ways that the information is presented at a useful level. The website is currently free, and written and developed by specialists in their own fields of medicine. It was not clear from the website itself how it was funded, but when I contacted them they described funding by Google advertising, purchase of subscriptions and provision of sponsored subscriptions by a sponsor, currently www.onmedica.net, itself a website which is aimed at GPs, free but in part drug-company sponsored. One does not need to register to use GP Notebook at present, so there are no particular security concerns. It has grown significantly since inception in 1995 and is now cited by the UK National Electronic Library of Health Virtual Branch Libraries in Primary Care and Emergency Care. They are careful to point out that although they receive funding from advertising, they maintain editorial independence.

Aside from a questionnaire to find out which demographic group visitors to the website belong to, there is nothing in the way of a customer satisfaction survey; there is only the now ubiquitous opportunity to contact the website’s authors by e-mail: however, in doing this to ask about the funding of the website I received a speedy reply.

Access speed—on broadband = 4
Speed of searches = 4
User-friendliness = 4
Overall score = 4—should be bookmarked

Euan Thompson