SearchMedica

http://www.searchmedica.co.uk

This Internet search engine has been designed for general practitioners (GPs) and claims to cut out irrelevant non-medical results by searching sites handpicked by other GPs for relevance, reliability and authoritative results. This ‘whitelist’ of GP-selected sites can be searched from the home page with ease. All of the major journals are there and many vetted patient information leaflets. Home pages of major teaching hospitals are also included as is the whole of the National Health Service (NHS) information system and domains from the Department of Health. The volume of data searched is massive and so there are some useful features to allow targeting including the ability to just search NHS sites for guidelines, regulations and local information. Another useful feature is that if the user feels any sites are missing then they can include the details in the ‘Suggest a site’ area.

SearchMedica is one of many medical search engines but claims to be tailored to the needs of GPs. I think it is also highly relevant to practising occupational physicians and is invaluable in keeping up-to-date with published management guidelines such as those from National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). This is likely to be more important in the future as NICE embarks on evidence-based reviews of topics of interest to the occupational health community such as low back pain and long-term sickness and disability.

Backing

The site has been devised by the medical journal PULSE and the site itself is powered by the US search company Convera.

Overall

Excellent for literature searches and quick and easy to access authoritative clinical guidance.

Scoring

Access speed = 4/5
Speed of searches = 4/5
User-friendliness = 5/5
Overall score = 4/5

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