

BOOK REVIEWS

EVERONE, CHADD A. **Doctor-Internet: How to Use the Internet for Health & Medicine.** Berkeley, CA: Foundation for Infinite Survival (FIS), Inc., 1999. 228 pages. \$32.95. ISBN:0-9701066-0-2. Includes CD-ROM and one-year subscription to Website.

Books about health care information on the Internet are plentiful, and many have been reviewed in this column. Because of the speed at which the Internet changes, the information in these books is often outdated quickly, sometimes even before publication. This book is no exception.

The goal of the book is to teach patients, facilitators or "someone helping the patient to obtain the most appropriate medicine" (p. 6), and health professionals how to use the Internet to find health care information. The first part of the book focuses on finding medical information in MEDLINE and describes various search techniques using Internet Grateful Med (IGM). Using IGM is the most obvious flaw of this book, because it will be phased out beginning in April 2001.

The book does provide cursory looks at several other Internet resources such as dictionaries and encyclopedias, other National Library of Medicine (NLM) databases, MEDLINEplus, drug information, a history of NLM, cancer resources, clinical trials, proprietary databases, Internet search engines, and commercial Websites. These resources are so vast that entire books have been written on any one of these topics. Trying to expose the intended audience to this range of information is an ambitious project for such a small book.

The book includes a CD-ROM with templates for the searches, the text of the book itself, glossary and ancillary files, changes that have occurred since the book's printing, and graphics. One year's free sub-

scription to the author's Internet site at www.doctorinternet.com is also provided. Information on the Website includes the most recent versions of the book, glossary of biomedical terms, and routine upgrades. Access to special reports, consulting services, a syndicated column, and educational programming is also mentioned. A companion site, www.doctorinternet.org, offers examples of Everone's basic research reports and links to a syndicated news column.

Everone's background for writing this book is difficult to verify. A search to find biographical information on him in various databases (Biography Index, Biography Resource Center, and the Complete Marquis Who's Who) produced *no* information nor did searches for additional publications by Everone in MEDLINE, First Search, or Books in Print. One is left with the author's statements about himself. He lists his credentials as I.M. and Ph.D. but does not specify in what fields these titles were earned. He does provide a narrative about his use of libraries over the years to produce basic research reports. Everone does not appear to have a documented background in library or information science and refers readers to their local public library for access to computers and the Internet and to "use of the librarians there to assist you with the procedures" (front cover).

The first several chapters of the book deal with techniques and templates for Internet searches of MEDLINE using IGM. While the search mechanism will no longer be valid with the phase-out of IGM, the book does include most of the essential fields and search qualifiers needed to do a basic MEDLINE search. However, readers need to possess the necessary skills to translate that information to PubMed.

The author's technique to produce a basic research report re-

trieves a tremendous number of articles, and no attempt is made to demonstrate how to limit those results by language, date, or any other quality-filtering procedures. He claims that "within fifteen to thirty minutes, even if a novice, you can be doing professional-level research" (front cover). This professional-level research means finding all the review articles on a topic without any quality filtering. The book *Super Searchers on Health & Medicine* [1] would be a better purchase to study the skills needed for professional searches.

The cursory overview of MEDLINEplus in the book is clearly outdated and briefly revised on the CD-ROM. In this reviewer's opinion, many consumer health care questions are best addressed starting with MEDLINEplus to provide a good overview of topics on basic consumer health information.

The coverage of cancer resources is also inaccurate, because Everone equates CancerNet from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as synonymous with Physicians' Data Query (PDQ). However, PDQ is only one portion of the CancerNet menu, which also includes the search system of CANCERLIT. Information about clinical trials is also much more easily located using *ClinicalTrials.gov* [2] than PDQ, because keyword searching is possible in *ClinicalTrials.gov*. However, *ClinicalTrials.gov* was not available at the time this book was produced.

If this book were updated to feature another MEDLINE search system, it might have a limited place in public library or consumer collections. Its approach is much too superficial and introductory to be of significant value to the majority of health care professionals. A consumer collection would do better to obtain a copy of *Health Care Resources on the Internet: A Guide for Librarians and Health Care Consumers* [3] for its chapters on MEDLINE, consumer health, and Internet

searching. Anyone attempting to teach consumers how to search MEDLINE should heed the advice that "searching systems can appear and disappear in a heartbeat," and one should try different search systems and master several [4].

Everone's book is clearly outdated at this time, not only in choice of MEDLINE search system (IGM) but also in its coverage of essential consumer health resources such as MEDLINEplus and *ClinicalTrials.gov*. This reviewer recommends that purchasing this book be put on hold until those revisions are available.

Sue H. Felber
Medical Library
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Institute &
Research Institute
Tampa, Florida

References

1. DETWEILER SM. Super searchers on health & medicine: the online secrets of top health & medical researchers. In: Basch R, ed. Medford, NJ: CyberAge Books, 2000. (Super Searchers, volume 4).
 2. National Library of Medicine. ClinicalTrials.gov. [Web document]. Bethesda, MD: The Library. <<http://clinicaltrials.gov>>.
 3. WOOD MS, ed. Health care resources on the Internet: a guide for librarians and health care consumers. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 2000.
 4. BROWN HA, RANKOW VG. MEDLINE on the Internet. In: Wood MS, ed. Health care resources on the Internet: a guide for librarians and health care consumers. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 2000:73.
-