



# CHRC News

Vol.2, No. 4, July 2000

A Service Funded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners

## Introduction

The dog days of summer are upon us, but a wonderful article by Julia Whelan, Head of Reference at the Sheppard Library at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, will help you keep your cool. It leads off an issue devoted to selected web sites and print sources where you can quickly find quality information about drugs, herbs, and dietary supplements. As always, please let us know what you'd like to see in future issues. Our contact information is at the end of the *CHRC News*.

## Treadwell Library Contract Renewal

Treadwell Library is delighted to announce that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners has renewed its contract, from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001, to provide consumer health reference to regional member libraries.

## CHRC Workshop Wrapups

### Joint CHRC/SLRS Workshops

In May, the MBLC sponsored five workshops covering services offered by the CHRC and the SLRS (Statewide Legal

Reference Services). Kate Kelly and Marnie Warner, Project Managers for CHRC and SLRS, respectively, reported that 120 librarians from 96 libraries attended and asked many thoughtful questions.

## MAHSLIN

At the MAHSLIN (Massachusetts Area Health Sciences Library Network) annual meeting in April, Kate Kelly presented "The Consumer Health Reference Center at Treadwell Library, Massachusetts General Hospital: A Resource for Massachusetts Regional Member Libraries" to an audience of approximately 100 health sciences librarians.

## MLA

Despite the late Friday afternoon time slot, Kate Kelly reported a lively audience of librarians at her workshop, "Consumer Health Reference" during the April annual meeting of the MLA (Massachusetts Library Association).

## Clinical Trials on the Web

### ClinicalTrials.gov

[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/press\\_releases/clintrlpr00.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/press_releases/clintrlpr00.html)

An excellent source of clinical trial information, *ClinicalTrials.gov*, a service of the National Institutes of Health, developed by the National Library of Medicine, provides patients, family members, health care professionals, and members of the public easy access to information on clinical trials for a wide range of diseases and conditions. This site currently contains over 4,000 clinical studies sponsored primarily by the National Institutes of Health. During the coming year, additional studies from other Federal agencies and the pharmaceutical industry will be included.

The trials listed in **Clinicaltrials.gov** are being offered at over 47,000 locations nationwide.

### **Electronic Journals**

#### **HighWire Press**

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/news/pr/00/000301highwire.html>

Stanford University's **HighWire Press** announced several months ago that publishers of the journals it hosts now provide free online access to the full text of more than 137,000 articles. There are three entirely free journals, 51 journals offering free back issues and 32 offering free trial access.

### **Massachusetts Models**

Continuing our **Massachusetts Models** series, Julia Whelan, Head of Reference at Sheppard Library at the Massachusetts

College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, describes her library's resources. Her article is based on a presentation made at the MAHSLIN annual meeting in April.

### **Sheppard Library: A Resource for Drug, Pharmacy and Herb/Supplement Information**

**Sheppard Library at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences** can serve as a resource for librarians on topics dealing with drugs, pharmacy practice and herbs. While the primary mission of the library is to meet the needs of the College's 1,700 students and faculty, the library is open to the public and the reference staff are willing to help unaffiliated callers. Keep in mind, though, that depending on the number of users in the library, we may not be able to provide immediate assistance, but we try to get back to every caller within 24 hours.

The **Reference Desk (617-732-2813)** handles a steady stream of drug related questions, primarily from health professionals around New England. Our collection has many authoritative and comprehensive resources, both print and electronic, in the drug information and clinical pharmacy fields. Reference librarians can also call on the expertise of our faculty. One of the most frequently asked questions is foreign drug identification. The caller has a foreign product and wants to know the ingredients, and whether there is a U.S. equivalent. We search databases and numerous drug compendia from around the world to answer these questions. Other frequently asked questions include:

- What company manufactures a particular product?
- Which drugs do not contain such fillers as sugar, lactose, etc.?
- What are the geographic locations for clinical trials for a new therapy?
- Which drugs are most commonly prescribed?

The **Drug Information Center (617-732-2759)** at Sheppard Library provides consultation to health care professionals and consumers. At the moment, this service is free of charge although there are plans to convert to a subscription-based structure in the future. Currently, access is via phone with an e-mail query function to be implemented in the future. Typical questions include:

- therapeutic use recommendation
- drug interactions
- adverse effects
- dosing and duration of use
- foreign drug identification

It's best to have the person with the question call the Center directly, since the pharmacist may need background information. Turn-around time must be allowed because the pharmacist staffing the Center may not be able to work on each question immediately.

In response to the increased interest in alternative medicine, the College opened the

**Center for Integrative Therapies in Pharmaceutical Care (CITPC)**. Staffed by two faculty members who are experts in alternative medicine, the CITPC is working to gather information and conduct research on substance-based alternative therapies (herbs and supplements). The Sheppard Library received a grant from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine to collect resources to support this work, particularly the education of pharmacists on herbs and nutritional supplements. To date, the Library has added more than ten journals in alternative medicine to its collection and started subscriptions to a variety of fee-based alternative medicine databases.

CITPC faculty and this writer are collaborating with other researchers from a variety of health professions in the **Longwood Herbal Taskforce**, at <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/index.shtml>. This web site provides peer-reviewed, referenced information on a growing number of herbs and dietary supplements. To date, of the 75 herbs or dietary supplements listed, 32 monographs are completed, 30 are in progress, and 13 are planned. For each herb or supplement, there is a comprehensive monograph, a handout for the clinician, and a patient handout. New monographs are added monthly.

Questions on herbs and supplements may be directed to the Reference Desk. However, if the question involves a clinical interpretation or recommendation, it should be directed to the Drug Information Center. Staffers there will channel these inquiries to the CITPC faculty.

Library web page:

<http://www.mcp.edu/si/sl.shtml>

Author's web page:

<http://www.mcp.edu/ap/sp/fac/whelan.shtml>

Reference Desk: 617-732-2813

Drug Information Center: 617-732-2759

Hours: Library hours vary according to academic calendar; generally:

Monday-Thursday, 7 am-11 pm

Friday, 7 am-5 pm

Saturday, 11 am-6 pm

Sunday, 1 pm-11 pm

Reference Desk: Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm

### **Selected Sources of Drug Information on the Web**

Though there is a plethora of drug information on the web, it is a challenge to find facts that come from highly reputable sources, and can be readily understood by consumers. Sometimes, finding such information is as easy as going into the **USP (United States Pharmacopeia) *Advice for the Patient***. This was recently made available through the National Library of Medicine at their **Medlineplus** web site, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html>. Here you will find a guide to over 9,000 prescription and over-the-counter medications. You can browse by the first letter of the generic or brand name. Information provided includes brand names; descriptions; risks, benefits and proper use

of the medication; precautions; side effects, and additional information.

***Advice for the Patient*** is also available through InfoTrac's Health Reference Center, via the Massachusetts Library and Information Network. Type the name of the drug you're looking for, then go to the **Limit** menu. In the **limit the current search** area, type **advice for the patient** in the **to the following journal(s)** box.

### **Drug-Herb Interactions**

#### **The Natural Pharmacist**

<http://www.tnp.com/tnptools.asp>

Choose the **Drug Interactions Tool** to help decide which herbs and nutrients might be harmful (or helpful) if combined with a medication. Enter your age and gender, and choose a prescribed or over-the-counter medication from the drop-down menu to view possible interactions. For example, a 30 year old woman taking Paxil can see that the herbs yohimbe and St. John's wort, as well as the supplements SAM-e and 5-HTP, have all been found to react adversely with Paxil.

### **New Medicines in Development**

#### **Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)**

<http://www.phrma.org/webdb/phrmawdb.html>

According to its home page, PhRMA membership represents approximately 100 U.S. companies that have a primary commitment to pharmaceutical research. Use the search engine, or click on **Explore the New Medicines in Development Database**, then click on **Proceed**. This database contains information on pharmaceutical products in the research and testing phase. Though the information has been obtained through government and industry sources, it may not be comprehensive. You can search by disease, indication, or drug. (An indication is a symptom that indicates the need to prescribe a medication or perform a treatment or procedure.) To search by disease, select a disease from the drop-down menu. After you choose a disease, you will see a list of indications. Choose an indication to see a list of drugs being developed to treat it.

### ***Newly Approved Drugs***

#### ***Doctor's Guide Global Edition***

<http://www.pslgroup.com/NEWDRUGS.HTM>

This comprehensive, up-to-the-minute site contains news from highly reliable sources relating the approval of new drugs or of new indications for previously available drugs. Click on **New Drugs/Indications** for a chronological listing of news. Sources include the FDA as well as press releases from drug companies and scientific societies. The **Doctor's Guide** search engine was used to answer a recent CHRC question: "Where can I find more information about a new

procedure called vertebroplasty?" There were four hits, one of which led to a press release from the **Society of Cardiovascular & Interventional Radiology (SCVIR)** describing a new technique for pain relief for those suffering from compression fractures due to osteoporosis. Using the search engine **Google**, at <http://www.google.com>, it was easy to find **SCVIR's** site, <http://www.scvir.org/>, and read much more information about this procedure. Among the many extras in the **Doctor's Guide** are links to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and CancerWeb's online medical dictionary.

### ***Consumer Drug Information Sheets (FDA)***

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/default.htm>

This site for consumers provides basic information about medications recently approved by the FDA. Only information about drugs approved since January 1998 appears on this page. Since these are newly approved drugs, they may not yet be on the market.

### ***Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (FDA)***

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/default.htm>

This is an extensive, searchable site which includes such topics as new and generic drug approvals; FDA Drug Approvals List; a reverse chronological listing of all drugs approved since September 1996; new drugs

approved for cancer indications; major drug information pages (e.g. Thalidomide, Viagra); consumer drug information; over-the-counter drug information; drug safety and side effects; and public health alerts and warning letters.

### **Selected Sources of Drug Information in Print**

An excellent print source of "where do I find it?" is Bonnie Snow's *Drug information: a guide to current resources* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1999). Over 700 pages long, it is thoroughly annotated, with an all-important appendix, "Directory of Internet Resources Cited." Chapters cover newsletters available online, guides to product identification, sources of information about side effects, and much more.

Other print sources that we use at Treadwell to answer your drug-related questions include *Therapeutic guide to herbal medicines* (Austin, Tex.: American Botanical Council; Boston: Integrative Medicine Communications, 1998) often better known by its alternative title, *Complete German Commission E monographs*. It includes 300 monographs, about two-thirds of which are positive, covering herbs that have been found safe and effective. The remaining

monographs are negative. Each monograph includes synonyms, composition, uses, risks, and an evaluation.

Varro Tyler is an expert in the field of herbal medicine. We may turn to one of his books, *Tyler's Honest herbal : a sensible guide to the use of herbs and related remedies* (New York : Haworth Herbal Press, 1999) for more descriptive information on 100 botanicals, selected on the basis of their significance to the public. Each description is followed by references. He is cautious in his recommendations and consistently advises discussion with health care providers.

*Tyler's Herbs of choice : the therapeutic use of phytomedicinals* (New York : Haworth Herbal Press, 1999) contains chapters devoted to diseases of various body systems (e.g. cardiovascular, respiratory, nervous system) and describes in a scientific but generally understandable style, the herbs which may be used for their treatment.

Searching for reliable, understandable, and relevant information, whether for an over-the-counter or prescription drug, can be a challenging problem. Please don't hesitate to contact us for assistance!

#### **CHRC Contact Information**

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or 617-726-8600**

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or TreadwellQ&A@partners.org**

**Consumer Health Reference Center  
Treadwell Library  
Bartlett Hall Extension 1  
Massachusetts General Hospital  
Boston, MA 02114.**

**<http://www.mgh.harvard.edu/library/chrcindex.html>**