

## GP Specialist e-Library

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*An e-Library for GPs set up by NHS Education Scotland.*

In 2005, the Knowledge Services Group within NHS Education for Scotland commenced work to develop a specialist e-Library for GPs, <[www.elib.scot.nhs.uk/gp](http://www.elib.scot.nhs.uk/gp)>.

Having responsibility for the main NHS e-Library for Scotland <[www.elib.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.elib.scot.nhs.uk)>, the Group had previously created subject specific portals or specialist e-libraries for cancer, diabetes and health-associated infection among others. Aware of the current policy within NHS Scotland directed at providing a primary care driven health service and also that usage analysis and anecdotal evidence suggested that GPs were among the lowest users of the NHS Scotland e-Library, it was decided to develop the GP e-Library to address this gap in information support. The primary objective of the development was to provide quick and easy access to relevant clinical reference sources to support everyday clinical practice with a secondary aim of supporting long-term educational needs such as continuing professional development.

### Requirements gathering

A Virtual Reference Group, made up of GPs not only working in general practice but also responsible for the training and education of GPs throughout Scotland, was set up to steer the development of the GP e-Library and to act as representatives of the GP community. The group provided invaluable guidance and insight throughout the requirements' gathering, development and implementation process and continue to have input to the service as it becomes established within the GP community.

An initial literature review was carried out to provide background information and to help define the requirements' gathering process. The

literature revealed that there are a number of obstacles which hinder GPs finding the answers to day-to-day questions arising in general practice. These include a lack of time to spend on searching for information and a lack of both information technology and information seeking skills. It also suggested that GPs require ready access to bottom-line answers, i.e. pre-digested information that does not require interpretation or appraisal.

The methodology for gathering the requirements included conducting a focus group of GP Trainers concentrating mainly on their experiences of using the existing e-Library interface and also desirable characteristics for a GP-focused e-Library. Two members of the Knowledge Services Group were also invited to observe a GP throughout one day of the general practice surgery and this provided a very useful insight into how GPs actually work, the nature of clinical queries arising and their subsequent information-seeking behaviour.

Following the focus group and observation day, five in-depth interviews were carried out with members of the Virtual Reference Group, alongside a survey of GP Trainers in the North and West of Scotland. The two regional groups were approached in a slightly different manner with questionnaires emailed out to the North region and posted out to the West region. Interestingly, there was a much better response rate to the postal survey so we based our findings on results from this group. From the 133 questionnaires sent out, 69 completed forms were received representing a 52% response rate.

### Summary of findings

The major findings of these exercises revealed the following key issues:

- *Clinical queries are the most common and important information need among GPs;*
- *Treatment-related (particularly drug-related) queries are the most common type of clinical query;*
- *GPs also seek information to provide patient information, for continuing professional development and for keeping up-to-date;*
- *GPs only want to be presented with a small core number of resources directly relevant to general practice;*
- *The British National Formulary (BNF) and Clinical Practice Guidelines are the most popular resources used by GPs;*
- *Colleagues feature as quick and easy sources of information;*
- *Core resources include guidelines, best practice, up-to-date clinical evidence, patient information and summary documents (rather than primary literature);*
- *e-Books are popular among GPs as they feel confident and comfortable using these resources;*
- *Google is popular due to its comprehensiveness and speed. It is also seen as useful for finding information on rare conditions;*
- *Lack of time is the biggest obstacle for GPs seeking information, followed by a lack of information seeking and IT skills.*

### Design of the GP Specialist e-Library

The findings from the requirements' gathering process were translated into requirements for the GP e-Library which had the following implications for the organisation and design of the service.

- *Speed – GPs need speedy access to bottom-line, pre-digested answers to clinical queries;*
- *Simplicity – addressing the need for*

# He@lth Information on the Internet

speedy access but also relating to GPs lack of confidence in their information seeking and IT skills;

- Powerful Google-style searching – reflecting Google's popularity among GPs combined with the benefits of searching only a small number of evaluated resources directly relevant to general practice;
- Browsing – allowing GPs to browse resources by category, including patient information, guidelines and evidence-based practice as well as by common conditions observed in general practice to ensure quick and easy access to everyday clinical queries;
- Clinical Query Answering Service – this was seen as a very desirable service among the GPs questioned.

## Interface

### Homepage

The interface for the GP e-library has been kept as clean and simple as possible with the homepage providing GPs with the option of searching or browsing for clinical practice resources plus a set of quick links to popular resources. The navigation bar provides access to core general practice resources (such as guidelines and patient information) along with links to journals, books and resources to aid continuing professional development, as well as context-sensitive help throughout the site.

The search facility is a Clinical Practice Resource cross search designed to provide access to a focused, reliable and trustworthy set of resources which can be used to support clinical decision-making directly, i.e. research which has been filtered, appraised and presents bottom-line answers. As such, the resources include those which have immediate relevance to consultation.

The default search cross searches a number of categories from the TRIP database including:

- Evidence-based summaries (taken from sources such as *Clinical Evidence* and *Bandolier*);
- Clinical questions (taken from services including the *NeLH Primary Care Answering Service*);
- Systematic reviews (from the *Cochrane Library*).

Guidelines (including SIGN and NICE guidelines) and patient information (from NHS24 and Patient UK) resources can also be added to the search as can the BNF for medicines information.

The 'Quick Links' provide quick and direct access to a small number of resources which proved popular with the GPs questioned and are, therefore, important to have available at their fingertips.

### Common Conditions

The Common Conditions area provides a list of common conditions observed in general practice with each heading linking to a small number of resources relevant to the management of each condition, including guidelines, evidence-based information and patient information. We have included conditions identified in the GMS contract and have updated this with new contract conditions including chronic kidney disease and obesity. This list is repeated on the Common

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Conditions page and within this page we have also included an alternative browseable list which is organised by sex and age group. This area was adapted from work developed by a member of our Virtual Reference Group to assist in the training of GP registrars, but it has also proved popular with GPs in general.

These browse tools or topic directories are used throughout the GP e-Library and the e-Library as a whole. They allow the Information Management team to pull together resources catalogued for the e-Library and organise these according to a combination of MESH term and resource type, e.g. guidelines or patient information or even by audience type. Any new resources added to the e-Library which meet the criteria for a particular topic directory are then automatically added to the directory so keeping these links up to date with new resources.

### Guidelines and Patient Information

Both the Guidelines and Patient Information pages also utilise topic directories. The Guidelines page includes a list of guidelines organised

by specialty with each specialty linking to the appropriate SIGN and NICE guidelines and also guidelines from other organisations such as Prodigy, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and also society guidelines. GPs can also search for guidelines or follow the quick links to the major organisational and society guidelines. Patient information is organised in a similar manner.

### Books, journals and articles

Within the Books page, it is possible to search for books or to browse for them by specialty. There is also a short list of core books selected for their relevance to general practice such as the ABC series. Our needs' analysis reflected that reference books are particularly popular resources among GPs and the *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* was one of the most popular resources overall; thus, the books page also features an integrated cross search via OVID of the full text of both this and the *Oxford Textbook of Primary Medical Care*, enabling GPs to go straight to the

appropriate sections of these reliable reference resources with a quick keyword search.

The Articles and e-Journals page features a set of quick links to core titles including the *BMJ* and the *British Journal of General Practice*; again, it is possible to search for journals or browse for them by title. This page also features a quick and easy search for articles with a default keyword search set-up which searches across a number of key biomedical databases, including Medline, Embase, Cinahl (covering nursing and allied health), PsychInfo (covering psychology) and the Cochrane Library. This facility is mirrored in the search page which also enables more flexible and sophisticated searching including the option to link out to more specialised databases such as AMED for information about complementary and alternative therapies and Travax for travel health information and advice.

### Longer term needs

The Continuing Professional Development page lists events including

conferences, meetings and training days aimed at GPs or primary care practitioners in general with the emphasis on events taking place in Scotland.

The Keeping Up-to-Date page repeats the conferences and events diary and also includes a number of RSS feeds selected as being particularly useful for GPs including the *NHSS Media Monitor*, the *NeLH Hitting the Headlines*, daily news from the *BMJ* and *Drug News* from the National Electronic Library for Medicines. In addition, table of contents alerts have been set up for core journals including the *British Journal of General Practice* and *The Lancet* and GPs are encouraged to set up their own alerts via ZETOC (the British Library's Electronic Table of Contents service).

## Plans for the future

It is important that the GP e-Library continues to evolve so as to take on board fully the needs of GPs and, eventually, all primary care staff groups. As part of this process, we have recently implemented an integrated cross-search of the TRIP service incorporating relevance ranking and are currently undertaking research into the effectiveness of the clinical practice resources search in comparison to commercial alternatives.

We are also investigating setting up a Clinical Query Answering Service allowing GPs to submit queries to a team of information professionals who will search and evaluate the available literature and try to provide an answer. In order to ensure the long-term feasibility of supporting this service, GPs will be encouraged to find answers for themselves via the GP e-Library or by looking at previously answered questions, before submitting any new queries to the team.

We have recently embarked on a promotion and training programme to raise awareness of the service among all GPs in Scotland. The initial phase of this will focus on promoting the service to GP trainers, associate advisors and appraisers who we hope will then help to cascade the information and training to GP registrars and ordinary GPs. A second phase of the programme will focus on reaching GPs through local Community Health Partnerships and also on reaching practice managers.

Finally, we continue to communicate regularly with our Virtual Reference Group who, we envisage, will act as an editorial group suggesting new resources and conditions which should be highlighted in the quick links and common conditions areas. We also hope to mount a user feedback form on the site shortly to gather suggestions for improvements and to ensure that the service is fulfilling its primary purpose of providing quick answers to everyday clinical queries.

## Editorial Board

- Betsy **Anagnostelis**, Librarian, Royal Free Hospital Medical Library, University College London, London
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## Complementary approaches to menopausal symptoms: RCN guidance for nurses, midwives and health visitors

[www.rcn.org.uk/publications/pdf/complementary\\_approaches\\_menopausal.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications/pdf/complementary_approaches_menopausal.pdf)

Published by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) in 2006, this 23-page booklet aims to help nurses inform and educate women about alternatives in the treatment of menopausal symptoms. It also aims to stimulate nurses to undertake further research and scrutinise alternative approaches themselves. The booklet acknowledges the importance of oestrogen therapy in relieving moderate-to-severe symptoms but recognises that nurses need to be able to communicate more effectively about non-oestrogen therapies 'in a balanced evidence-based way'. It discusses issues around the placebo effect in relation to evidence on complementary therapies. Information is provided on a range of complementary approaches including life-style factors, herbal treatments, phytoestrogens and complementary therapies, and sources of evidence are referred to.

## 100 Million Web sites

[www.useit.com/alertbox/web-growth.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/web-growth.html)

Recent statistics show that the Web has now grown to over 100 million sites: a phenomenal growth in only 15 years.