

Have a Minute?

Okay, I admit it: I'm an information junkie. I don't know how I lived before Google™ came along or what I would do if I couldn't access an electronic library. Whether true or not, I believe I can find the answer to almost any question if I can get online. I know that's not true for everyone. In fact, for many in the United States, using the Internet is an intermittent activity at best (Horrigan, 2007). I began to wonder where busy nurses turn when they have clinical questions. How do they get answers when and where they are needed? How can they be confident they can find what they need?

Not surprisingly, lack of time, access to computers and the Internet, and electronic search skills are some of the barriers to finding clinical information. In a study of more than 700 clinical nurses, most turned to a colleague to get answers (Pravikoff, Tanner, & Pierce, 2005). So where do those colleagues get their information? Fewer than half of the nurses were familiar with the phrase *evidence-based practice*, used research reports to support their practice, or had ever used a hospital library. Although the nurses reported that they were comfortable using the Internet to search for information, few had used bibliographic electronic databases (e.g., CINAHL®, MEDLINE®).

In another study, of more than 500 nurses, many turned to colleagues to find answers to their questions. That pattern of information seeking expanded to include electronic resources after the nurses received instructions about accessing and using those resources within the clinical setting (Tannery, Wessel, Epstein, & Gadd, 2007). Seeking drug information, locating patient education materials, reading articles, and searching for answers to clinical questions were the main reasons cited for going online. MacCall (2006) evaluated health professionals' use of clinical digital library

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collections in 20 institutions for more than a year. Forty-eight percent of those searches lasted *less than one minute*. The health professionals either were very good at finding the information they were looking for or quit their searches.

Accessing an abundance of information becomes quite a challenge. I have worked with nurses to access and search electronic databases to find information regarding their clinical practice. I often recommend they get familiar with a few databases that will meet most of their needs. For example, healthcare providers may want to become familiar with the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) (www.ons.org) or National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov) Web sites. For patients, the American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org) along with a few others, particularly advocacy groups, are worthwhile resources. Similarly, electronic databases such as CINAHL and MEDLINE can be accessed through hospital or institution health sciences libraries. However, information searches can be intimidating, often overwhelming, and frequently frustrating. It takes time and practice to be able to find what you need, when and where you need it—especially if you have less than a minute. It also requires confidence in the site and search you use.

Because technology as a means to collect and disseminate information has become more important, ONS is launch-

ing a journal Web site service with MetaPress to help make accessing and searching the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing* and *Oncology Nursing Forum* more useful for clinical nurses. I encourage you to visit the site and start exploring this improved search feature. You will

be able to find evidence-based reviews (PEP® cards) and articles, among other relevant materials.

Learn how to access whatever electronic collections are available to you and become comfortable using them. Ask your institution's librarian to give an in-service on your unit, or visit the library. After all, how can we expect to promote evidence-based nursing to deliver high-quality cancer care if we can't access information to help us do that—in less than a minute!

References

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