Web Resource Reviews and Local Care
by the
MPHP 439 Health Management and Policy
Spring 2007 Class

Compiled by Eva Nieder

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According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) heart disease is the number one cause of death in the US. It is implicated in 700000 deaths every year, amounting to 29% of all deaths in the US (http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/index.htm). The term heart disease encompasses many conditions, but the focus of this review is limited to coronary artery disease, myocardial infarction, heart failure, and arrhythmias.

- Coronary artery disease: is the most common heart disease in the US (http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/index.htm). It is due to blockage or spasm of the vessels feeding the heart muscle.
- Myocardial infarction: is the irreversible damage of the heart muscle due to ischemia or inadequate oxygen supply. Commonly referred to as a “Heart Attack”.
- Heart failure: occurs when the heart is not pumping adequate amounts of blood to the body.
- Arrhythmias: are disturbances in the rhythm of the heart.

The following websites were rated using the following system:
* poor source of information , ** okay , *** good , **** very good, ***** excellent.

http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000
American Heart Association.
Rating: **** 1/2 very good/ excellent

I have found this best patient education website. It has accurate descriptions of heart disease symptoms, and warning signs of possible complications like heart attack and stroke as well as instructions for what to do in such situations. The site is also very comprehensive with coverage of heart diseases in men, women, adults and children. I also liked that most of the information was available in Spanish, which widens the target audience considerably. It provides useful guidelines for management of the disease, from lifestyle changes to recommended lab tests to medical and surgical treatment options. The site goes beyond the “eat right and exercise” message that all patients are familiar with, to specific descriptions of what foods they should consume and which to avoid. I thought the section with tips for eating out, which suggested healthy alternatives for food choices grouped by cuisine type; and the heart healthy certified grocery product lists were particularly helpful to patients. The site does not overlook patient caregivers, as is often the case; it makes good suggestions for caring for patients while maintaining the wellbeing of the caregiver. There are links to the local AHA locations and events that welcome the public’s participation. The site is also full of self-evaluation quizzes and free e-mail newsletters that require a subscription. It also has the most recent statistics, an encyclopedia of all disease and management vocabulary, recent advances in research and links to publications. It also has a link to the AHA website for medical professionals. The only negative point about this site was that it did not have a local physician search
engine or a provider search engine.

Medline Plus
Rating: *** 1⁄2  good/very good

This is a good website for explaining the different heart conditions, their symptoms and disease processes. It also provides a good description of the diagnostic tests, medical treatment and surgical procedures. Some lifestyle guidelines are provided with illustrated exercise routines. The site is illustrated very well with diagrams for the normal and diseased heart, and the surgeries that may be performed.

Although a good patient education source, I think this site targets the educated patient, not a layperson. Despite thorough explanations of procedures and disease, it does not give precise instructions about what changes the patients should make to ensure a good quality of life with heart disease. The navigation of the site is difficult, and depends on hyper-linking terms, which sometimes requires a lot of navigation and reading and increases the level of complexity for the user. Overall, I think this site is best described as an excellent illustrated patient dictionary.

http://www.webmd.com/diseases_and_conditions/heart_and_vascular.htm

Web MD in collaboration with the Cleveland Clinic
Rating: **** very good

This is another great site. It has complete information on different heart conditions. It also discusses diagnostic tests very well, but the best sections were those on treatment. The website explains the medical and surgical treatment options superbly, and gives detailed instructions on how to maximize patients’ benefit from treatment. This was the only site with a local physician directory. Brief tips on lifestyle modifications are also included. The site also has a useful frequently asked questions section and a good resources section.

Possible areas of improvement for this site include: more detailed suggestions for lifestyle changes, the tips provided were useful but too short and concise. The physician directory only provided the addresses and phone numbers of physicians, but had no information about the doctor’s qualifications and certification. Special populations like minorities and children are not considered in this website.
Overall, this is a great website that simplifies very complicated information to a level appropriate for the average consumer

http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/index.htm

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Rating: ** okay
This website has good resources, statistics and national disease trends. There are links to many websites containing useful information. The frequently asked questions and risk factor fact sheets sections are particularly useful. Navigating the site was easy.

On the other hand, I felt that the site was targeted towards scholars and people interested in studying the condition rather than patients seeking information. While being full of statistics and national data, it did not have detailed descriptions of the different types of heart disease, treatments and what patients can do to ensure a good quality of life. I do not see this site helping a patient looking to understand his condition and wanting to learn ways he/she can lead a fulfilling life.
HIV/AIDS
By Mati Hlatshwayo

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that can progress to cause the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). This spectrum of disease is characterized by the failing of the immune system that makes the body susceptible to fatal opportunistic infections. The rate of infection and death is increasing in this country as it has around the world. In the United States, this is particularly true in the homosexual population and in ethnic minority groups. For this reason, it is important for people to have sources for both general information and information that is targeted to specific demographics.


   This website was developed by the NIH to give simple, and easily accessible information for people from a range of backgrounds, information about HIV. For health officials, it gives access to the most up-to-date guidelines for HIV diagnosis, management, drugs and research. It also serves as a place for forums discussing the most relevant issues facing both patients and health care providers. For patient it has brief “fact sheets” that give people interested in the disease or living with it, brief take home points that give the big picture concepts that are needed to grasp the underpinnings of the disease.

   I would highly recommend this website to people looking to learn about the nature of the disease, the treatments available and current research. This to me is geared towards people interested in HIV from an academic perspective and the website lays out the information in a way that is easy to navigate and well organized.

2. Local information (and a resource for homosexual individuals): http://www.aidstaskforce.org/

   The AIDS Task force of Greater Cleveland is the oldest AIDS service organization in Ohio. As such it serves as a great resource for community based HIV prevention education, and non-medical direct services to people living with HIV and AIDS. Many of the volunteers at the Task Force are people living with the disease and they are of different sexual orientation and ethnic origin, making them more likely to relate to the population of people seeking help. The mission of the Task Force is to provide leadership in prevention, education, supportive services and advocacy.

   I would recommend the AIDS task force as a resource for patients trying to cope with living with HIV. They are the central driving force for community endeavors in Cleveland, and can direct people looking for help in most areas to the relevant resources. Most compelling is the fact that the Task Force gives a name and a face to a disease that can be so abstract. What one learns about HIV here adds texture to the information scattered in texts, journals and articles. The website is more an introduction to what I feel is the main resource: the organization itself (Located downtown). It is extremely
important in it its ability to provide information about where individuals can access free resources, specifically free drugs and free HIV testing.

3. More in depth information for health officials:
http://www.clevelandhealth.org/ActiveServerPages/Health/HIV/HealthStatistics/HIVAIDS.asp

This website is difficult to navigate due largely in part to small font size however, it provides extremely important information to health officials for whom rates of increase/decrease in infection, AIDS progression and death are important in allocating costs and funds. It gives important reports that are updated annually on the prevalence, exposure, mortality rates and demographics associated with the disease in Cleveland.

4. HIV haven for African Americans in Cleveland:
http://cms.clevelandclinic.org/community/body.cfm?id=83

Agape is a partnership that was made between the Antioch Baptist Church and Cleveland Clinic HIV/AIDS partnership. AGAPE stands for Action, Growth, Awareness, Prevention, and Education, and is also a Greek word for unconditional love. It was developed to raise awareness about HIV in the African American population which is important considering that HIV rates are increasing at the largest rate in this demographic. This partnership makes it easier to target prevention and education programs in a culturally sensitive manner in order to more effectively tackle the issue. Although the religious component makes it seem exclusive to people of other religious orientations, the organization has tried to make the focus more about the black community than religious affiliation. I would critique the website as scant however, its mere existence (especially with telephone information about ways to contact them) makes it a very important tool for African Americans in Cleveland. It is especially important because it provides information for free HIV testing, information about risk in Cleveland, and raises awareness about HIV in the black community in Cleveland. This more personalized message can be more effective than some of the general education programs out there.
Parkinson’s Disease
By Ruth Magtanong

Rating Scale

General Public
Easy to read disease information; Links to useful websites; Current news; Updates; Contact info for facilities; Support topics, support groups; Programs and services; Downloadable reading materials; Dictionary

Amateur Scientist
Disease description but limited info on resources

Medical Doctor/Researcher
Language of website regarding description of disease, prognosis, disease management, and treatment at the expert level (difficult to understand for the general public); Focus on national/global responses: current research, clinical trials, etc.

Background Information
Parkinson’s disease is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system. It occurs when dopamine-producing neurons in the part of the brain called substantia nigra die or become damaged. Signs and symptoms of Parkinson’s disease are: tremor (shaking), slowness of movement, muscle rigidity and difficulty with balance. Parkinson’s disease primarily affects motor movements, but other symptoms manifested in individuals can include disturbances in mood, behavior thinking and sensation (non-motor). It is a chronic disorder that requires broad-based management: education, support group services, mental health, nutrition, exercise, etc. There is no cure for Parkinson’s disease, but relief of symptoms can be addressed with medications or surgery.

Review: General Public
www.parkinson.org

National Parkinson Foundation
1. Appeal of site: Very appealing due to use of color and photos, layout organization well designed, topic of interest easily found
2. Ease of navigation: search option, general topic buttons on top, side buttons for specifics
3. Disease Description: Informative and comprehensive, language written for general public
4. Current information: research/education provided clinical trials data, research findings, library/publications provide free printable reading materials, caregiver reports, access to The Parkinson Report, Option button “Click here for more recent news”
5. Listing of area providers: see section (Find a resource button) below
6. People friendly: useful websites, personal stories, glossary of terms, tips to maintain health, options to print/email, discussion corner (forum for asking questions to several different care providers), Find resources option, events calendar, ways to get involved (NPF Networks, support groups, donation/grants, caregiver connections, community partners), option to contact the NPF, text size option (enlarge text of the web page)
Find a Resource Button:
1. Database to find resources (Centers, Support Groups and/or Physicians) at the local, national and international levels
   - University Hospitals of Cleveland
   - Center for Neurological Restoration, Cleveland Clinic Foundation
   - Cleveland West
   - Fairview Park Parkinson Support Group (Rocky River)
   - Lake County (Concord)
   - Maple Heights Parkinson Support Group (Maple Hts.)
   - Parkinson Education Program of Greater Cleveland
   - Parma Hospital Health Education Center
   - Physician
   - Support Group

2. Database to find a neurologist: specific categories relating to physician’s background and training for Parkinson’s disease local, national or international areas.

Review: Amateur Scientist
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parkinson's_disease
Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia
1. Appeal of site: No interesting photos, layout similar to reading a textbook, more specific info available but not quite at expert level
2. Ease of navigation: Content outline provided, external links provided to useful websites (associations and foundations providing education and resources)
3. Disease Description: More in depth and specific info but not at expert level (like reading a high school science textbook) – history, pathology, signs/symptoms, causes, epidemiology, Rx
5. Listing of area providers: not provided
6. People friendly: Bibliography, external links to useful websites, drug comparison chart, information available in other languages

Review: General Public
Medline PLUS
1. Appeal of site: info organized but simple, missing the graphic appeal
2. Ease of navigation: Navigate easily by topic of interest
3. Disease Description: Overview of disease linked to National Parkinson Foundation website
4. Current information: Latest news section, date last reviewed, topic last modified
5. Listing of area providers: Option to find local services/providers (limited to certain areas, e.g. only list services for southeast Ohio), Find a neurologist directory
6. People friendly: Sections on Alternative Therapy, Coping, Nutrition and Disease Management, Dictionary, Interactive Tutorial, Options to Print/Email, Organization List, Information linked to relevant websites geared more towards general public, Information available in Spanish and Chinese

Review: General Public
Parkinson’s Disease Foundation, Inc

1. **Appeal of site:** Graphic appeal with color and photos of people, Layout organized
2. **Ease of navigation:** General topic buttons on top, specifics on sidebar, general overview page
3. **Disease Description:** Informative and language aimed at the general public, sections provided include overview of disease, symptoms, causes, medications/treatments, surgical options, role of the patient
4. **Current information:** Section on news in community and science, programs/events
5. **Listing of area providers:** No Option button available to find local providers, Need to contact PDF directly for referral in finding neurologist
6. **People friendly:** Provides an Ask an Expert service, Online Expert Resource Center, Publications and resources section, Sign up to receive updates/news by email/mail, Contact info, Options to Email/Print, Join the list, Option to help through donations, Comprehensive section on “Role of the Patient,” option to help find support groups online/mail/phone, exercise program created for Parkinson available, Directory list of national/regional/international organizations and web resources

Review: **Amateur Scientist**

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke: Parkinson’s Disease Information Page

1. **Appeal of site:** Simple layout, no graphic appeal
2. **Ease of navigation:** Content outline provided
3. **Disease Description:** Language understandable but more science oriented, some phrases and terminology need definitions or further clarification, no dictionary provided, more geared towards doctors and researchers needing disease and research updates overview
4. **Current information:** Links to research findings, Date of last update
5. **Listing of area providers:** Not provided
6. **People friendly:** Links to research findings, organizations and related NINDS publication and information, publications in Spanish available, Contact info for organizations

Review: **General Public**

Michael J. Fox Foundation

1. **Appeal of site:** some graphic appeal, Michael J. Fox’s photo and name lend celebrity recognition to disease
2. **Ease of navigation:** Search option, General topic buttons, Specific buttons sidebar, each page access to glossary, news, events, newly diagnosed guide
3. **Disease Description:** Informative and language aimed at the general public, sections include description, symptoms, causes, epidemiology, drug Rx, surgery, research for a cure, related diseases
4. **Current information:** Latest news, events and benefits; Section “What’s New”
5. **Listing of area providers:** Not provided
6. **People friendly**: Specific section guide For the Newly Diagnosed (issues covered include Q&A may not discussed with medical doctor, say to others, employment, insurance, out and about, intimacy and reaching out), Community Info page (Links for Patients and Caregivers), Links to other websites, Resources (publications and books), community fundraisers, Contact Info, Email updates, Newsletter, Employment opportunities, Disability information/benefits

**Local Resources:**

- **Cleveland Clinic**  
  [http://www.clevelandclinic.org/](http://www.clevelandclinic.org/)

- **Neurological Institute**  
  [http://cms.clevelandclinic.org/neuroscience/body.cfm?id=142](http://cms.clevelandclinic.org/neuroscience/body.cfm?id=142)

  Review: Easy access to get to right website with information regarding Parkinson’s disease using the search option. Search takes you to the Neurological Institute that manages the disease. From the website, there is a **Make an Appointment** button. There are also options to find a physician, locations, maps/directions and visitor information.

- **University Hospitals of Cleveland**  

  Review: Two options to find physicians managing Parkinson’s disease: (1) Find a physician search by specialty and/or by city (2) keyword search. Physician search yields the following information: information about the doctor, request an appointment, office locations and contact info. Keyword search yields list of doctors working with Parkinson’s disease, and other web pages with info.
Schizoaffective Disorder
Web Resources Reviews & Local Care
By Haowei Wayne Liang

About Schizoaffective Disorder
Schizoaffective disorder is a mental illness characterized by the presence of both psychosis and mood disorder. Psychosis refers to a severely impairment of thought and perception, symptoms of which may include hallucinations (i.e. seeing/hearing/sensing stimuli that are not actually there), delusions (i.e. beliefs that are not based on reality), and disorganized thinking (e.g. incoherence, flight of ideas, very fast and incoherent “word salad” speech). Other symptoms of schizoaffective disorder include catatonia (i.e. rigidity/extreme loss of motor ability, or hyperactive motor activity), personality changes, and negative symptoms, such as affective flattening (i.e. severely decreased emotional response), alogia (i.e. severely decreased speech), and avolition (i.e. severely decreased desire, motivation, and will). Individuals diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder may also experience major depressive, manic, or mixed (i.e. simultaneous major depressive and manic) episodes. The diagnosis is classified into two subtypes based on mood disorder symptoms: bipolar type (i.e. having both highs and lows) and depressive type (i.e. having only lows).

Schizoaffective disorder affects 1 in every 200 people and comprise of 3-5% of all psychiatric admissions. Schizoaffective disorder has a better prognosis relative to schizophrenia, but a worse prognosis relative to mood disorder. Treatment typically consists of psychotherapy and a combination of medications that best suits the patient. Types of medication include antipsychotics for the psychotic symptoms, antidepressants and mood stabilizers for the mood disorder, and sleeping pills to allow rest from anxiety or hallucinations. Electroconvulsive (electric shock) therapy is available for patients who do not respond to medication. Because a cure has not yet been found, the goal of treatment is to reduce and stabilize symptoms in order to improve quality of life.

About This Review
We reviewed and rated a number of popular web resources providing information on schizoaffective disorder, based on usefulness to patients and family members. They are listed below, sorted first by rating, then in alphabetical order.

Mayo Clinic | 5/5
The Mayo Clinic is an international leader in medical care and research, and as such, is a reliable source of information. The information provided in the article on schizoaffective disorder is easy to understand and relevant to patients and family members. Although family and patient support resources are not provided, this is an excellent resource for general patient-centered information on schizoaffective disorder. http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/schizoaffective-disorder/DS00866

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) | 5/5
NAMI is the primary national grassroots advocacy group for people affected by mental illness and their families. As such, NAMI provides high quality information from a patient’s or family member’s point of view. The article on schizoaffective disorder is written by Dr. Dilip Jeste, chief of geriatric psychiatry at UCSD. Links to high quality internet resources are also provided, as well as online and in-person support groups for patients and family members. http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=By_Illness

WebMD | 5/5
WebMD is a reliable source of patient-centered information on the internet. The article on
schizoaffective disorder is written in easy-to-understand English and provides thorough information on the diagnosis. The information provided is reviewed by the Cleveland Clinic Department of Psychiatry and Psychology and is very reliable. 
http://www.webmd.com/content/article/60/67124.htm

**eMedicine | 4/5**
eMedicine from WebMD is a very reliable internet resource for medical information. The article on schizoaffective disorder is written by Dr. Guy E Brannon, a psychiatrist at Louisiana State University, and edited by 5 other medical professionals. The intended audience is medical professionals, so the information can be difficult for patients and family members to understand. However, the information is very authoritative, which makes this website a good place to get the same high quality information that you would to get from your own doctor.
http://www.emedicine.com/med/topic3514.htm

**UCLA Family Social Support Project | 4/5**
UCLA Family Social Support Project is an university-based resource that attempts to provide direct information and support from mental health experts to families. The page on schizoaffective disorder is thorough and written in easy-to-understand language. The information provided is reliable and of high quality. A list of good resources, such as organizations and books, is also provided. Unfortunately, the page has not been updated since 2001, limiting its usefulness. http://www.npi.ucla.edu/sss/schizoaffective.htm

**Answers.com | 3/5**
Answers.com provides encyclopedia-style information from a variety of sources of varying quality. In this case, the article on schizoaffective disorder is derived from the Encyclopedia of Medicine, which is an dependable source. This is a good page to get a general overview of what schizoaffective disorder is. However, as a general info site, the page is lacking in information specifically relevant to patients. http://www.answers.com/topic/schizoaffective-disorder-2

**GeometricVisions.com | 3/5**
This website is created by an artist/musician who suffers from schizoaffective disorder. The purpose of the website is to communicate the experience of schizoaffective disorder to those who are not familiar with it. The information is highly personal and anecdotal, which may be helpful to patients and family members. In addition, the author has included a good recommended reading list, including websites and books, which is worth checking out. http://www.geometricvisions.com/Madness/schizoaffective-disorder/

**MentalHealth.com | 3/5**
MentalHealth.com is one of the oldest mental health websites still in existence on the internet. Created in 1995, it is maintained by Dr. Phillip W. Long, a psychiatrist who received the Canadian Psychiatric Association’s Special Recognition Award in 1995 for this website. However, the page on schizoaffective disorder is limited in usefulness. The page provides both American and European diagnostic criteria, an online diagnosis survey, and a description of treatment. While the treatment page is outdated (last updated in 1990), the page provides a good overview of treatment options, types of medication available, and common side effects. This is an useful website to gain an understanding of what to expect from medical treatment. http://www.mentalhealth.com/dis/p20-ps05.html

**PsyCom.net Depression Central | 3/5**
PsyCom.net Depression Central is maintained by Dr. Ivan Goldberg, a psychiatrist and clinical pharmacologist who specializes in treating individuals with hard-to-treat mood disorders. Dr. Goldberg maintains an up-to-date list of links to useful online resources for schizoaffective
disorder, mostly from reputable sources (last updated January 2006). However, the page itself does not provide any information on its own, nor does it provide a description or review of the links provided, decreasing the usefulness of the links list.  
http://www.psycom.net/depression_central.schizoaffective.html

Schizoaffective.org | 2/5
This website provides resources for patients and family members from a patient’s point of view, including links to online support groups and alternative treatment options. However, the page is very openly critical of current treatment modalities and of psychiatrists and psychiatry in general. The page advocates abstaining or stopping psychiatric medicine. While the site provides online peer support mailing lists to patients and family members, the openly biased viewpoints make this page an unreliable source of unbiased information.  
http://www.schizoaffective.org/

Wikipedia | 2/5
Wikipedia is a good site for a general overview of a wide range of topics. Articles are written and edited by visitors to the site, which can include mental health experts, patients, or laypeople with no specialized knowledge. While this allows the article on schizoaffective disorder to reflect a wide range of viewpoints and biases, the information provided is not 100% reliable. However, Wikipedia is still a good starting point in your research.  

Local Care in Cleveland, Ohio
Cleveland Clinic | http://www.clevelandclinic.org/psychiatry/
The Cleveland Clinic ranks 3rd overall and 20th for psychiatry among the top US hospitals by reputation, according to the US News & World Reports’ rankings for 2006.

University Hospitals Case Medical Center | http://www.case.edu/med/psychiatry/
University Hospitals Case Medical Center (formerly University Hospitals of Cleveland) ranks 24th among the top US hospitals for psychiatry by reputation, according to the US News & World Reports’ rankings for 2006. Psychiatry is the second highest ranked specialty at UH, behind Pediatrics.
Alcoholism: Alcohol Dependence
By Deanna Shuster

Dependency on Alcohol is also known as alcoholism or alcohol addiction. It is a chronic disease that includes certain signs and symptoms; these may be:

- **Craving**: A strong need, or compulsion, to drink.
- **Loss of control**: The inability to limit one’s drinking or stop despite repeated physical, psychological, or interpersonal problems.
- **Physical dependence**: Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, anxiety, and physical illness.
- **Tolerance**: The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol in order to feel its effects.

The use of alcohol is a widely accepted part of the American culture and other cultures around the world. Due to this acceptance, alcohol can cause more problems than other drugs. According to a 2004 Global report by the World Health Organization there are over 75 million people worldwide with diagnosable alcohol use disorders. Aside from dependence, alcohol has been linked to over sixty disease conditions. Alcohol dependency not only affects the diseased individual but also those in their immediate surroundings and society as a whole. For this reason, there have been great efforts to reduce the level of harmful social and health consequences from alcohol use. These efforts require not only preparation and planning but also and the time and commitment of many people including those suffering from the disease, their family members and friends, counselors and healthcare professionals.

**Reviews**

There are many websites available for those searching for information about alcohol dependency. These sites give information ranging from defining the disease to information on national measures being taken to fight alcoholism and its consequences. These websites can be found using common search engines such as google, yahoo, and askjeeves. The following sites were rated on a scale based on how informative they are overall in providing information to a newly diagnosed individual. Some factors that were taken into account while rating the sites were: ease of navigation, quality of information, whether or not the site provided links and access to other resources, and how often the site was updated. The rating scale is as follows:

- ☺☺☺☺☺ - excellent,
- ☺☺☺☺ -very good,
- ☺☺☺ - good,
- ☺☺ - fair,
- ☺ - poor

**Websites**

**Name**: MedLine Plus: Medical Encyclopedia


**Rating**: ☺☺☺

This site gives a comprehensive overview of the disease. It includes pictures and easy to read information for individuals who may be unfamiliar with the disease or knowledgeable individuals looking for specific information. Numerous other alcohol related problems are listed with informational links as well. Links are also
provided with information about nationally recognized alcohol dependence support groups. The site is very easy to navigate as links are provided at the top to skip to information the viewer may find most pertinent. Although the site is generally very informative there are not many references provided for individuals seeking more information.

**Name:** NIAAA: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism  
**Site:** http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺  
This website provides tons of information. It seems to be geared toward a professional audience or research oriented individuals rather than someone hoping to learn more about the disease. Extensive information is provided about national publications regarding alcoholism and links to these publications are also provided. There are numerous fact sheets with basic information for those looking to learn more about alcoholism but the site itself contains a lot of information for professionals as the mission of NIAAA is to conduct and support research to reduce alcohol related problems. There are a multitude of links provided for further research.

**Name:** The Health Authority: Changing Behaviors to Improve Health  
**Site:** http://www.healthauthority.com/AlcoholDependence.htm  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺  
This site was very effective at providing basic information to viewers and offering quick facts and warning signs of alcohol dependence. It was also helpful in that it listed five national centers with toll free numbers for help and treatment. There are a number of helpful links however, the website has not been updated in over a year so some of the links are nonfunctional.

**Name:** Wikipedia: the Free Encyclopedia  
**Site:** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholism  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺☺☺  
This site provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of alcoholism. It was extremely easy to understand and was even available in over thirty different languages. The site was extremely easy to navigate and provided visitors with a table of contents in the beginning of the list of information. Information ranged from basic terminology to screening measures for alcoholism to medications used to treat the disease. Links are provided in each paragraph and links are even used so that viewers can look up other words and terms that may not be familiar. Overall this site is excellent for those hoping to learn about alcoholism and it also provides links to nearly ten support groups and over 25 references for further investigation. The site is also updated daily.

**Name:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Alcohol and Public Health  
**Site:** http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺  
Upon first visiting this site I was a little surprised that more basic information was
not supplied since the CDC is a national health organization. However, upon further research I found several links for basic facts, statistics and current public health objectives relating to alcohol. Since the site gives information about alcohol use in general not all of it is geared toward those with dependency issues. The site was very easy to navigate and links were provided on the site to search the document for pertinent information. It had been updated within the past seven months and offers helpful information for those looking for current publications, additional resources, and measures used to gather information about alcohol consumption. In general the site is excellent for information on alcohol and it’s effects but for the newly diagnosed it is a good site for information and resources.

**Name:** eMedicine: Alcoholism  
**Site:** http://www.emedicine.com/med/topic98.htm  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺

This site provides viewers with an extensive amount of information from a professor at the Mayo Medical School. It goes into detail about what populations are affected by alcoholism and which subsets of these populations are generally more affected. It is an article so it reads through like a report rather than a site to navigate for information and contains a lot of research information. Although it is based on research and discusses several studies it provides readers with background information, a list of symptoms, history, treatment options, and an extensive list of medications and references.

**Name:** Alcoholscreening.org: How much is too much?  
**Site:** http://www.alcoholscreening.org/  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺☺☺

This site is set up unlike any of the others. It begins with a survey to evaluate your own drinking and then has opportunities to learn more about alcohol consumption, cutting down, pregnancy and alcohol, questions and what to do if someone you know has a problem. It is an excellent resource and provides a way to find help and support in your area. There are hundreds of organizations in most communities listed.

**Name:** NCADD: National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence  
**Site:** http://www.ncadd.org/  
**Rating:** ☺☺

This mission of the NCADD is to fight the stigma and disease of alcoholism and drug addictions. It provides several fact sheets about alcohol and it’s relationship with crime, driving, taxes, youth, women and problems in the workplace. It provides a lot of information about guidelines from government organizations about the consumption of alcohol and information for parents looking to talk to their children about alcohol. It also has a section for questions and answers with a medical doctor who is chair of the NCADD medical/scientific committee. The site provides a list of prevention and treatment programs but only to those programs that are NCADD affiliates so there are not programs listed for every state or community.
**Name:** Mental Health Channel: Alcohol Abuse and Dependence  
**Site:** http://www.mentalhealthchannel.net/alcohol/index.shtml  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺☺  
This site is extremely easy to navigate as links are provided along the side of the page for quick reference to topics. It also provides information that was not given by other sites about levels of intoxication and withdrawal. The general overview is easy to understand and prevalence and incidence rates are also given which was not common to all of the sites visited. Different types of treatment are thoroughly explained. The site was updated within the last four months but it does not provide many links for further research.

**Name:** MayoClinic.com: Mental Health: Alcoholism  
**Site:** http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alcoholism/DS00340  
**Rating:** ☺☺☺☺☺  
This site was very easy to understand, easy to navigate, well organized and was very informative. Links are provided at the top of the page to navigate through the information thoroughly. There is also an option to view the page and print or email without advertisements and links that can be very helpful for someone hoping to share information. The site was updated within the last three months. It also references alternative medicine practices unlike many of the other sites. There is also a section on the site to ask a specialist questions.

**Local Care Providers**  
Local treatment can be found at the following places:

Harbor Light  
Substance Abuse Division Detox/Unit 1  
1710 Prospect Avenue,  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
(216) 781-3773x143

Scarborough House Inc  
2430 West 10th Street,  
Cleveland, OH 44113  
(216) 781-5538

Matt Talbot for Women  
Saint Vincent Charity Hospital  
2351 East 22nd Street,  
Cleveland, OH 44115  
(216) 592-2800x

Haven I  
3200 Franklin Boulevard,  
Cleveland, OH 44113
Recovery Resources
2728 Euclid Avenue,
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 431-4131

Community Assessment and Treatment Services at Southeast Womens Center
7835 Harvard Avenue,
Cleveland, OH 44127
(216) 441-0200

Berea Childrens Home and Family Servs
2121 East 32nd Street,
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 431-8117x

Alternatives Agency Inc
Self Center
1804 East 55th Street,
Cleveland, OH 44104
(216) 361-7359x

Catholic Charities Services
Corp DePaul Family Center
2320 East 24th Street,
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 687-0000x26

Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland
12201 Euclid Avenue,
Cleveland, OH 44106
(216) 721-4010

Cleveland Treatment Center Inc
1127 Carnegie Avenue,
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 861-4246
Vet Addiction Recovery Ctr/Wade Park Alcohol/Drug Dependence Treatment Unit
10701 East Boulevard,
Cleveland, OH 44106
(216) 791-3800x7839
Orca House Inc
Mary Gooden Recovery
1909 East 89th Street,
Cleveland, OH  44106
(216) 231-3772

New Visions Unlimited Inc
9700 Garfield Boulevard,
Cleveland, OH  44125
(216) 883-6700

More local providers can be found at:
http://www.alcoholscreening.org/getHelp/index.asp
http://www.adasbcc.org/findinghelp/provider.htm
Local support groups can be found at:
http://www.alcoholscreening.org/getHelp/resources.asp
Alcoholism
By Pankaj Goyal

Overview

Alcoholism is the consumption of or preoccupation with alcoholic beverages to the extent that this behavior interferes with the alcoholic's normal personal, family, social, or work life. Many terms are applied to a drinker's relationship with alcohol. Use, misuse, heavy use, abuse, addiction, and dependence are all common labels used to describe drinking habits. Alcohol dependence refers to a more serious disorder than alcohol abuse and involves excessive and maladaptive use leading to tolerance changes, withdrawal symptoms, loss of control and inability to cut down or stop. For most people, moderate alcohol consumption poses little danger of addiction. Other factors must exist for alcohol use to develop into alcoholism. These factors may include a person's social environment, emotional health and genetic predisposition. In the United States today, more than 15 million Americans are estimated to suffer from alcoholism. According to community surveys, over 13% of adults in the United States will experience alcohol abuse or dependence at some point in their lives. The most common substance of abuse/dependence in patients presenting for treatment is alcohol.

Web Resources for Patients

The following website reviews were rated based on the source and accuracy of information, appeal of the site, ease of navigation, overall content, self help tips and local support groups information. The rating scale is as follows: *****Excellent, ****Very Good, ***Good, **Fair and *Poor.

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (A subdivision of National Institute of Health) *****
www.niaaa.nih.gov/
The NIAAA website is one of the most reliable sources of information on alcoholism both for general public and researchers. It has a very helpful FAQ section for general public in both English and Spanish. There is information on most recent publications, research & clinical trials and links to other resources. NIAAA also sponsors some of other useful websites such as National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC), College Drinking Prevention and Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free. Besides being very easy to navigate, a printer friendly version is also available for those who avoid computers!

Medline Plus *****
Medline Plus is a service of United States National Library of Medicine and National Institute of Health. The above link is an excellent source of information for both health care professionals and patients. The content is also available in Spanish which is an asset for Hispanic patients. This website contains links to some of the most useful information and updates on Alcoholism including Alcohol-Use Quiz: The Cost of Crossing the Line (Mayo Foundation for Medical
Education and Research) and Alcohol: GetFit Self-Tests (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration). The website is easy to navigate and all useful links are presented on a single webpage.

**EMedicine ****1/2**
www.emedicinehealth.com/alcoholism/article_em.htm
EMedicineHealth.com is a first aid and consumer health information site. There are more than 5,500 pages of content written by physicians for patients and consumers. This website is set up in an appealing manner that makes it easy to navigate and find specific information. The website provides information to patients about self care at home, various treatment choices available, when and where to seek medical care and additional resources for references. Important information links to American Council on Alcoholism, Alcoholic Anonymous and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) are given.

**Mayo Clinic **** http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alcoholism/DS00340**
www.mayoclinic.com/health/alcoholism/
The Mayo Clinic website is specially designed for providing information to patients, introducing them to causes, symptoms and signs, risk factors and various treatment options available. There is information about various coping skills and support groups available including Alcohol Anonymous, Al-Anon and Alateen. Also, there is a mention about benefits of Acupuncture and other complementary and alternative medicines.

**Wikipedia***
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholism
Excellent comprehensive resource for health care professionals; however, information provided is too complex for patients or laypersons. Well chosen references, further readings and external links. Adequate coverage of pharmacological, nutritional and psychological methods of treatment; however, little or no mention about self help/coping techniques and preventive methods for high risk group.

**Magic Yellow (Online Yellow Pages) – For Cleveland Area****
http://www.magicyellow.com/category/Alcoholism_Information_and_Treatment/Cleveland_OH. html
This yellow pages website provides information about addresses and phone #s of local support groups available for patients in Cleveland area. It includes Alcohol Anonymous and Al-Anon local offices in addition to other big ones. The information provided is extremely valuable source for local patients seeking professional help through support groups.
Each year, thousands of parents and caregivers are faced with the diagnosis that their child has autism. Quickly, plans of free spirited childhoods are tossed away. Fortunately, parents today have access to countless Internet websites for information, treatment techniques and community support. From local hospitals to national advocacy organizations, information is readily available for those seeking guidance and perspective.

WebMd
Over the past several years, WebMd has become renowned as a website useful for information on those looking to self diagnosis or those who have recently been diagnosed. The information provided for Autism is just as helpful. An informational overview, list of symptoms, treatment and references for help are available. Information is generally user friendly and readable for any audience. The website also has quick links to physician directories and a “symptom checker.”
Overall rating: ★★★

Autism Society
http://www.autism-society.org
While not the most glamorous of websites, the autism-society site offers plenty of information to those looking for general information regarding the disorder. News and announcements regarding media broadcasts, national funding, policy and treatment breakthroughs and advocacy are provided. Visitors are able to sign up for a newsletter, donate money, and shop for items ranging from t-shirts to books. Information is provided in non academic formats in a straightforward manner.
Overall rating: ★★★ 1/2

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
The “Autism Fact Sheet” is one of the most useful sites on the Internet regarding autism. Navigation is simple and most of the information is on one page. Printer friendly information is readily available and unlike other pages the information is available in Spanish with a single click of a mouse. Helpful information regarding research and inheritance is provided in a frequently asked question format. Site visitors are also able to request additional information be mailed to them. The “contact us” is the least useful, that feature if more for an academic audience of researchers or medical providers.
Overall rating: ★★★★

Autism Web
http://www.autismweb.com/
Perhaps the most informative of the websites reviewed, the site is proof that content is just as important as appearance. Seemingly designed by parents for parents, information is divided into warning signs, what is autism, teaching, diet and supplements among others. Information is so straightforward it may cause some to overreact. For example, the symptom “does not babble or coo by age of 12 months” may have parents of perfectly healthy babies inquiring to their doctors
for no reason. A user friendly community message board is also available and current with daily postings by users. The site is riddled with some erroneous advertisements and has an extensive listing of autism conferences to which anyone can submit a posting.
Overall rating: ★★★★ 1/2

**Autism Speaks**
http://www.autismspeaks.org/
Similar to Autism Web, Autism Speaks is created by parents, for parents. This professionally done site is the passion of parents and Autism Speaks founders Suzanne and Bob Wright (CEO of NBC Universal/General Electric). With simple navigation, visitors are asked whether they would like to be informed or get involved. Applicable information only thought of by those affected is provided, for example, how to cope, legal rights and how to grow with autism. The site also has an online store, library and information on how to join the national autism walk.
Overall rating: ★★★★ ★★

**Autism Society of Greater Cleveland**
http://www.asgc.org/
The local site for the Autism Society of America, the ASGC website provides useful local information. Available in both English and Spanish, some general information is provided. Most of the site, though, is focused on the business of the Society. News regarding board announcements, meeting calendar and fundraising campaign outweigh the informational resources. The site is helpful for those looking to be advocates for autism more so than for frightened parents looking for information and guidance.
Overall rating: ★★

**The Cleveland Clinic Center for Autism**
http://cms.clevelandclinic.org/childrenshospital/body.cfm?id=68
Brief and to the point, the site is only two pages and is a useful quick local reference. Visitors are provided contact information to the center, maps and directions and an information request form. A review of articles by center staff, websites and useful e-mail list serves are provided.
Overall rating: ★★★ 1/2

**University Hospitals Health System Autism Center**
http://www.uhhospitals.org/rainbowchildren/OurServices/CentersandPrograms/AF/AutismCenter/r/ta bid/170/Default.aspx
Even more concise then The Cleveland Clinic website, UHHS Autism Center’s site is one page with the information that many visitors are looking for, how to get help, rehabilitation, treatment, etc. Direct contact information and an online appointment request system are provided along with a profile of the medical director.
Overall rating: ★★★★
Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)
By Hannington Muyenje

Guillain-Barré (ghee-yan bah-ray) syndrome (GBS) is a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks part of the peripheral nervous system. The first symptoms of this disorder include varying degrees of weakness or tingling sensations in the legs. In many instances, the weakness and abnormal sensations spread to the arms and upper body. These symptoms can increase in intensity until the muscles cannot be used at all and the patient is almost totally paralyzed.

Guillain-Barré syndrome is rare. Usually Guillain-Barré occurs a few days or weeks after the patient has had symptoms of a respiratory or gastrointestinal viral infection. Occasionally, surgery or vaccinations will trigger the syndrome. The disorder can develop over the course of hours or days, or it may take up to 3 to 4 weeks. No one yet knows why Guillain-Barré strikes some people and not others or what sets the disease in motion. What scientists do know is that the body's immune system begins to attack the body itself, causing what is known as an autoimmune disease. Guillain-Barré is called a syndrome rather than a disease because it is not clear that a specific disease-causing agent is involved. Reflexes such as knee jerks are usually lost. Because the signals traveling along the nerve are slower, a nerve conduction velocity (NCV) test can give a doctor clues to aid the diagnosis. The cerebrospinal fluid that bathes the spinal cord and brain contains more protein than usual, so a physician may decide to perform a spinal tap.

Where to get the best professional help on GBS in Cleveland, Ohio
Cleveland Clinic’s Neurology and Neurosurgery unit ranked fifth in the nation and best in Ohio, according to the just-released 2006 U.S.News & World Report “America’s Best Hospitals” survey. Contact Dr. Kelly Kevin and Dr. Robert Scheidls for adults and Dr. Mani Moodley for pediatrics. The neurology department can be reached on 216-444-220.

In addition, Maurice Victor, of Department of Neurology, Cleveland MetroHealth General Hospital, has carried out extensive research on GBS.

Websites Reviews
The following websites are based on a scale, one through five stars - with five-star being the website with best resources on the subject and one-star being the least resourceful website on the subject of GBS.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome Fact Sheet
Rating: * * * * *
By the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes. This site has the most relevant information on GBS. Furthermore, the site information is arranged in an easy-to-navigate fashion and it contains many resourceful links on the subject. Moreover, the site author - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes, is a national body entrusted with all neurological studies and can therefore be fully trusted. Site contains such information about the disorder as; What is Guillain-Barré syndrome?, What causes Guillain-Barré syndrome?, How is Guillain-Barré syndrome diagnosed?, How is Guillain-Barré treated?, What is the long-term outlook for...
those with Guillain-Barré syndrome?, What research is being done?, Where can I get more information?

http://www.gbsfi.com/
Guillain-Barré Syndrome Foundation International
Rating: *****
This website provides an in-depth look at the disorder. Furthermore, it provides information, support and opportunities for GBS patients, family and friends to network and communicate via discussion forums. Being a condition without known cure, these discussion forums among the affected people can be a useful network to belong to.

http://cmr.asm.org/cgi/content/abstract/11/3/555
Campylobacter Species and Guillain-Barré Syndrome
Rating: ****
This website is contains a very detailed account of the GBS disorder and it has been cited by many readers. The site is free to read and download or print copies of it and it has links to relevant websites for further studies on the subject. However, the language used may be too technical for a lay reader and therefore it is most suitable for a person with a medical education background.

http://pmj.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/76/902/774
Guillain-Barré syndrome – a review article from the Postmedical Journal (PMJ)
Rating: ****
Site contains a comprehensive list of possible clinical features of GBS and it refers to a wide variety of research on the disease. It contains statistical information about GBS including its origin and prevalence in other countries outside the United States. This information could be useful in case the reader would like to compare information about the disease that generated in United Sates with that from other countries. Article has subheadings that make it easy to navigate through to information that the reader may be interested in. The website requires no subscription fees or membership registration to access. However, according to the same article, a review of published reports on drug associated Guillain-Barré syndrome concluded that a definite cause-effect relation that the article cites could not be established with the available data.

Early electrodiagnostic findings in Guillain-Barré syndrome – an article by Gordon PH, Wilbourn AJ In the PubMed journal
Rating: ***
Article has a detailed review of GBS and quotes a lot of studies carried out on the subject. The problem with this article is that one needs to pay to retrieve the whole article and the information in the article may be too technical for a person with no medical background.
Osteoporosis
By Michael Smolak

Brief Overview: Osteoporosis literally means “porous bone”. It is the most common metabolic bone disease in the United States. It is often called a “silent disease” because there are usually no symptoms until a bone breaks. Osteoporosis has been estimated to cause ~1.5 million fractures (primarily of the spine) every year in the United States. It is characterized by a decrease in bone mass to a level which is incapable of maintaining the structural integrity of the skeleton. This is usually a result of increased bone resorption, as the rate of bone formation is often normal. Osteoporosis exists when an individual has lost 20% or more of their bone mass.

Website Reviews:
Several factors were used to rate the websites including, but not limited to: appeal of the site, credibility of source of information, overall content, ease of navigation, current treatments, where to go for treatment, and other links.
I utilized the popular Google™ search engine for this internet search of osteoporosis websites. The following websites were reviewed and rated using the following scale:

***** = Excellent    **** = Very Good    *** = Good    ** = Fair    * = Poor

National Osteoporosis Foundation
http://www.nof.org
Rating: *****
This is an excellent website for credible information regarding osteoporosis for both patients and professionals. I found it very easy to navigate. It provided a thorough review of osteoporosis including what it is, how it is diagnosed, how it might be prevented and how it can be treated. It provided information on patient support groups and linking up on-line. It also provided education for patients on the types of health care professionals who are involved in the management of osteoporosis.

National Institutes of Health: Department of Health and Human Services
National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
http://www.niams.nih.gov/bone
Rating: ****
This site contained a link to an extensive listing of free NIAMS/NIH publications. This site provided information for research trials that are currently being conducted by NIAMS and the NIH.

MedlinePlus
Rating: *****
This is the best site I reviewed for information relating to osteoporosis. This was the most comprehensive site, yet remained extremely easy to navigate. I have added this to my favorites tab and I am now recommending this site to patients interested in learning more about their medical conditions.
MayoClinic.com
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/osteoporosis/DS00128
Rating: ***
This site was concise, informative and provided links to other good websites but it does not measure up to some of the other excellent websites reviewed.

MedicineNet.com
http://www.medinicenet.com/osteoporosis/article.htm
Rating: ***
The quality of this website surprised me. My main concern with this site is credibility, particularly when compared to the other more authoritative sites reviewed.

WebMD
http://www.webmd.com/medical_information/condition_centers/osteoporosis/default.htm
Rating: **
I expected more from this website and was left disappointed following my review. This site would be good for individuals who want a quick, basic review for an initial investigation of a medical condition.
Melanoma
By Elizabeth Hastings

Due to the invasive nature of melanoma, it is considered to be the most serious form of skin cancer. Melanomas commonly begin as a mole. Over time the melanocytes in the mole, cells that produce pigmentation, begin to reproduce uncontrollably. Although the risk of developing melanoma increases with age, it remains one of the most common cancers of young adults. In the past twenty years the number of new melanoma cases has more then doubled. According to the National Cancer Institute 59,940 new cases of melanoma are expected in 2007 with 8,110 deaths. Decreasing sun exposure is the best way to decrease the risk of developing melanoma. Frequent screening to detect melanoma early can dramatically help improve patient outcomes.

Reviews

Each of the following websites was rated on a scale of three stars (***). A score of three stars indicates an excellent quality, patient friendly website while a score of two stars (**) indicates a good source. A website rated only one star (*) indicates a poor resource.

Rating: **
Medline Plus is a great resource for health care consumers seeking quality information on melanoma. The website is a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institute of Health. This is the first website listed after a yahoo search for melanoma. The website provides an easy to understand description of melanoma in written format as well as in the form of an interactive tutorial. Information on diagnosis, symptoms, treatment, prevention/screening and health check tools are included on the website. The section with pictures provides clear examples of melanoma according to the A- asymmetrical shape, B- irregular boarder, C- changes in color, D-diameter method for mole assessment. The link to clinicaltrials.gov provides a list of 204 potential clinical trials for enrollment. This could be useful for alternative treatment for some patients with melanoma. The website provides information in both English and Spanish. Although the website contains a link to find a health care provider, southeast Ohio is the only region of the state included in this service.

2.) Melanoma.com: http://www.melanoma.com
Rating: ***
Melanoma.com is a user friendly website that provides easy to understand information on melanoma, risk factors for melanoma, diagnosis and treatment. The website stresses the importance of early diagnosis and screening while providing specific links to information on protecting children from risk factors for melanoma. This website provides an abundance of information on what to expect with treatment, nutrition, questions to ask the physician as well as contact information for patient and family support groups. A glossary of terms can be found on each page that covers the content covered on that page. This website could be improved by including a physician finder.
3.) SkinCancerNet:  [http://www.skincarephysicians.com/skincancer.net](http://www.skincarephysicians.com/skincancer.net)
   Rating: ***
   Skin Cancer Net is an excellent resource for information on melanoma provided by the American Academy of Dermatology. This website provides clear and concise information on melanoma, screening, diagnosis and treatment in an easy to navigate site. Current research articles are available on the website as well as information on clinical trials. The site also includes an easy to use physician finder that produced three pages of physicians within twenty miles of my zip code.

   Rating: ***
   This website provides excellent information on melanoma, screening, diagnosis and treatment. An online booklet can also be accessed that reviews similar information with the addition of valuable pictures. When the website opens, it is interesting to see the projected statistics of melanoma in 2007. In addition, an entire section can be accessed that provides further cancer statistics. The website contains a dictionary of cancer terms and is also available in Spanish. There is also a link for support and resources that provides information on support organizations, finances and insurance as well as home and hospice care. A phone number and online chat address are given as additional resources for support and questions.

5.) Melanoma Patient’s Information Page:  [http://www.mpip.org](http://www.mpip.org)
   Rating: *
   This website was founded by an individual after his family member was diagnosed with melanoma in 1995. The website does not contain much basic information on melanoma and there is a disclaimer from the site manager that states he is not a medical professional. This website has multiple links to post questions and chat with other patients with melanoma. Although this site provides much interaction, if the patient is not educated on the stage of melanoma that they have the site can be overwhelming and discouraging as individuals with extensive metastasis and those going home with hospice post on the site. Having had melanoma that required no further treatment than a rescission and lymph node biopsy, I was more anxious about a reoccurrence of melanoma after reading several postings on this website. The website does provide links to research articles, clinical trials, therapy, travel assistance for therapy and a glossary. Additionally, there are links to ask questions to an online registered nurse and a physician that specializes in melanoma. The best place for an individual to receive general accurate information on melanoma via this site would be through the link to the Melanoma Research Foundation.

**Local Treatment**

The Cleveland Clinic Foundation is the only local result for melanoma treatment that appears through a yahoo search. The website provides additional information on melanoma as well as an easy to use physician finder and link to the cancer center website.
Chronic Venous Insufficiency Resources
By Matthew Wilson

Reviews

UpToDate
(http://patients.uptodate.com/topic.asp?file=gen_hlth/6907&title=Chronic+venous+insufficiency)
This outstanding website provides information at an accessible level and describes symptoms (with pictures), populations who are affected (i.e. who gets CVI), minimum information a physician needs in order to make a diagnosis, treatment and prevention options, and additional resources (covered in this review). This website is written by physicians for patients and is updated every four months. UpToDate also provides links to websites with professional-level information. This level of information requires a subscription that may be held by community or medical libraries.

National Library of Medicine (MedlinePlus)
(www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthtopics.html)
This site provides links to useful sites (covered in this review). It also provides a medical dictionary and encyclopedia. The encyclopedia provides an overview of the condition with a definition of the condition, associated symptoms (with links), and causes, incidence, and risk factors.

American Heart Association
(www.americanheart.org)
This site does not have information specific to CVI, but it does provide useful information on general heart and vascular health, as well as links to educational resources for fundraising, increasing awareness of your condition, and a health encyclopedia.

VascularWeb: Patient and Family Health Information
(http://www.vascularweb.org/_CONTRIBUTION_PAGES/Patient_Info\n\ncation/NorthPoint/Chronic_Venous_Insufficiency.html)
This website is operated by the Society for Vascular Surgery, a professional organization, and provides patient-oriented information on symptoms, causes, diagnostic tests your doctor may suggest, and treatment options. The site has several educational illustrations and a search function to find vascular specialists by last name or by state. However, the site provides no means for determining physician quality and may only identify physicians who are members of this society.

ClinicalTrials.gov
(www.ClinicalTrials.gov)
The website is run by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the government organization that funds a major portion of health research in the United States. This site allows patients to search for clinical trials that may provide experimental therapies and allow patients to contribute to medical advances in the understanding, prevention, or treatment of their condition.
Finding Good Care

Ohio State Medical Board: Consumer Information
(http://med.ohio.gov/consumer.htm)
State medical boards can be an excellent source of information on finding a physician, submitting complaints, and disciplinary action taken against physicians. Ohio’s SMB website has a consumer’s guide to finding good medical care, a search function to find a medical practitioner, and an online complaint submission form to make your voice heard. Ohio’s SMB also publishes monthly disciplinary action reports (http://www.med.ohio.gov/professionals-mfal.htm).

U.S. News & World Report: Best Hospitals
(http://www.usnews.com/usnews/health/best-hospitals/tophosp.htm)
U.S. News & World Report magazine provides a yearly review of the nations hospitals by specialty, disease and diagnosis. Also provides information on how to judge your local hospitals, which hospitals are accommodating to foreign language speakers, and a search function to find a hospital that suits your needs.

HealthGrades
(www.HealthGrades.com)
HealthGrades.com provides free hospital ratings by procedure/diagnosis or by awards received (i.e. clinical excellence, patient safety, or specialty excellence). This site also provides detailed hospital and physician information for a charge. The cost is $9.95 for the first 12 physicians researched. They do offer sample reports to get a preview of what you’re paying for, but state medical boards often provide physician information free of charge.

DocInfo
(www.DocInfo.org)
This website is operated by the Federation of State Medical Boards. State medical boards are the authorities that oversee physician licensure and issue and record physician disciplinary action. The website offers record checks on physician for a charge of $9.95 per physician. This information can often be obtained free of charge from the state medical board website.
Epilepsy
By Catherine Oakar

Background
Epilepsy is a chronic neurological disorder characterized by seizures—transient, yet recurrent, disruptions in the normal electrical activity of the brain. They can manifest as abnormal sensations, emotions, and behavior, and at times, convulsions, muscle spasms, and loss of consciousness. The disorder affects approximately 50 million people worldwide and is usually controlled, though not cured, with medication.

Websites

Epilepsy.com
Website: http://www.epilepsy.com
Overall rating: Excellent
The Epilepsy Therapy Development Project, a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to advance new treatments for people with epilepsy, provides this online resource to inform and empower patients and their families. Its pages are clear, colorfully attractive, and very simple to navigate. It comprehensively details the basics of epilepsy (types of seizures, diagnosis, and treatment), and offers valuable tips for living with epilepsy and ensuring the best quality of life possible. The website also provides information catering to all ages, from children to seniors. It allows patients and family members to share their stories and read about others who cope with the disorder. With its vast online video section, it provides users with countless multimedia opportunities to learn about the impact of epilepsy and the latest research and treatments available. Additionally, it provides a clear link to finding a clinical trial in any state and locating a doctor in a particular region. Overall, this site is a wonderfully thorough and easy-to-navigate website that caters to the newly diagnosed patient and those already coping with epilepsy.

Epilepsy Foundation
Website: http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org
Overall rating: Very good
As a voluntary agency solely committed to the welfare of those with epilepsy, the Epilepsy Foundation provides an easy-to-read website that answers basic questions about epilepsy. It also addresses a spectrum of issues beyond the medical scope of epilepsy including aspects of everyday life, social issues such as driving, education, dating, and alcohol use, and legal concerns related to insurance, financial assistance, and employment. Its online video (by those who have epilepsy and physicians who treat it) offers a brief overview of epilepsy and illustrates what to do during a seizure. It has clear “quick links” related to the newly diagnosed, women and epilepsy, and finding a doctor in a local area. The site also provides the latest research, volunteer programs, and recent news headlines related to epilepsy, in addition to other websites and online forums/support groups available. It is only somewhat aesthetically pleasing, but its information is updated regularly and is available in Spanish and it gives a refreshing, positive outlook to those with this neurological condition.
Epilepsy Canada
Website: http://www.epilepsy.ca
Overall rating: Good
This clear, thorough website offers a somewhat more engaging perspective on epilepsy than the others with its subtle images and crossword puzzles to test one’s knowledge. It provides basic information about epilepsy (and its many myths and misconceptions), links to countless resources in Canada and the United States, means of coping with the disorder and social issues involved, and its diagnosis and forms of treatment. More importantly, however, is that it is one of the few websites to offer a section specifically geared toward children and teens. The child’s guide and teen’s guide to living with epilepsy provide useful information written in an age-appropriate manner that addresses issues that children and teens with epilepsy may experience. Thus, this is a great site for the newly diagnosed patient of any age who wants basic, yet comprehensive, information about epilepsy.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Website: http://www.cdc.gov/Epilepsy/index.htm
Overall rating: Fair
Created by a reputable government organization, this website offers answers to the frequently asked questions of epilepsy, yet concentrates more on research of epilepsy and the work of the CDC to improve care and combat stigma related to the disorder. While it provides numerous other resources for information and offers its own information in Spanish, it is not a comprehensive resource of the many aspects related to epilepsy that would be useful to a newly diagnosed patient. Its most significant feature, however, is its toolkit for parents of teens living with epilepsy. The toolkit offers strategies and suggestions for assisting teens with epilepsy in taking responsibility for themselves, yet accepting the limitations on their freedom and choices that may be necessitated by the seizure disorder. It also provides valuable resources to help the entire family as well as support groups throughout the United States. Overall, however, the website is rather bland and more so directed at health care professionals and those interested in epilepsy research.

Support Groups and Online Forums
Epilepsy Association (Northeast Ohio)
Website: http://www.epilepsyinfo.org/support_groups.htm
Holds several different support groups to help those affected by epilepsy.

Epilepsy-L
Website: http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/epilepsy
An e-mail based support group for people with epilepsy, their friends and family, and health professionals. All ages welcome.

Finding the Best Local Care
In addition to websites listed above that contain links to finding local care, both the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals Case Medical Center have an Epilepsy Center devoted to finding
the best treatment for an individual, child or adult.
Cleveland Clinic website: http://cms.clevelandclinic.org/neuroscience/body.cfm?id=52
University Hospitals website: http://www.uhhospitals.org/tabid/1395/Default.aspx

Perhaps, though, the most comprehensive, unbiased, and easy-to-use database to finding the best local care is from the Epilepsy Foundation. Its database is composed of active members of the American Epilepsy Society.
Website: http://www.aesnet.org/epilepsyfoundation
Epilepsy
By Harriet Babikako

Epilepsy is a chronic neurological condition that makes people susceptible to seizures. A seizure is the change in sensation, awareness, or behavior brought by a brief electrical disturbance in the brain. The etiology is not properly understood but it can be due to anything that affects the brain like tumors and stroke. It results in disorganized firing of electric impulse which manifests as a seizure. This can involve the whole body or part of the body. Seizures consequently lead the affected individuals to fall into fire or boiling water when neglected by close relatives and hence the wounds or burns. It is believed to be multifactorial in origin, with genetic predisposition. It can follow a fall or trauma to the head, or after a febrile seizure in children. A seizure can be triggered by physical stress, setting up fires, and associated flickering lights like T.V and candle light. The moon in the sky also triggers the seizure. Disease activity and associated wounds in most cases influence physical adjustment outcomes, such as degree of pain and disability, fatigue, reliance on disease modifying drugs.

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder that requires substantial behavioral and psychosocial adjustments to control seizures and maintain a high quality of life. Behavioral adjustment in epilepsy usually involves adhering to strict medication regimens, getting adequate sleep, and proper nutrition, and adopting stress reduction programs to improve overall health and potentially reduce seizure frequency. Psychosocial adjustments usually involve coping with loss of independence, such as the inability to drive or to work, and dealing with the embarrassment and stigma associated with seizures. Taken together, behavior and psychosocial adjustment constitute self management behaviors.

Reviews
The following websites are rated according to the general information about the disease, ease of navigation, interaction opportunities, source information, updates and recent advances. The rating scale is as follows:***** Excellent, **** very good, *** Good, ** fair, and * poor.

www.epilepsy.com
Rating: *****
Epilepsy. Com is a useful tool for a newly diagnosed patient, the family members and the practitioners. Epilepsy.com gives a tour to the first time visitors and it gives basic information to those who are not familiar with the disease. Since the disease is chronic, there are online support groups, open emails, Q&A, self help tips. It has special groups information for example; the kids, teens, women, seniors. There are contacts for health facilities and doctors in your local area country wide. It has links that gives more information about the researches and new treatments. It also gives information on funding sources for those who are interested. The site also asks for suggestions from its audience.
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/epilepsy/epilepsy.htm
Rating: ****
The National Institute of Neurological disorder & Stroke (NINS) is a government funded organization that provides general information about epilepsy. NINS gives the definition of the disease, available treatment and other organization working on epilepsy with additional resources from MEDLINE.
The site is colorful, easy to navigate, has publications, research going on and has links to other websites for more information. The information is accurate and has publications in Spanish. This site is even good for individuals who would like to know about their diagnosis. The information is not too much to scare off people but rather inspires them to read more.

www.epilepsy.org.uk
Rating: ****
This site is operated by a registered charity organization in England. It provides clients with a wide range of information on epilepsy.
It gives information about the illness so that attitudes towards epilepsy are based on facts and not myths. The site teaches clients the discrimination act, driving laws for those with epilepsy, suggests suitable employment for people with epilepsy and stories are told how people live with epilepsy. The website has information in 8 languages, allows people to download material.(PDF )The website gives several services that are offered like; open forum, e-mail updates, helpline that is open throughout the week, information on epilepsy awareness training schools, and volunteers’ involvement. No links however to other websites or access to a local facility in your area.

http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org
Rating: ***
The epilepsy foundation is an agency that assists those individual and families affected with epilepsy. They provide general education, advocacy and services. The website looks appealing generally, has electronic community, personal stories, research, translated into Spanish. Unfortunately access to libraries, medical details is restricted to subscribers. The amount of information is limited to general knowledge, no details furthermore, the site does not give additional links for more information.

www.aesnet.org
Rating: ***
This website is managed by the American Epilepsy Society which promotes research and education for professionals dedicated to the prevention, treatment and cure of epilepsy. From the website patients look at services provided which includes finding a doctor in your area, guidelines on how to use the drugs, assistance drug programs, detailed in formation about the drugs as well as updates. The www.aesnet.org is easy to navigate but its web page is not appealing. It has links for
members only, professional development, annual meeting, publications, research, site map, and a menu for online CME.

www.epilepsy.org
Rating***
This website involves collaboration between The International League Against Epilepsy and The International Bureau for Epilepsy which work to raise awareness around the world and help to provide a broader understanding of the nature of epilepsy and the needs of persons with epilepsy. It helps to advance and disseminate knowledge about epilepsy, promotes research, education and training and improves services and care for patients, especially by prevention, diagnosis and treatment. This site could be used by newly diagnosed individuals as a way to get links to several other sites that provide detailed and essential information.
I chose to research information about coronary interventional care (i.e. angioplasty/stent installation) based on the fact that a family friend is going to have a procedure of this type done in the near future and is considering coming to the Cleveland Clinic in order to have it done. I found two key websites that I would use to advise this person to visit in order to obtain more information about the procedure and make an educated decision about where to have it done.

**www.americanheart.org**

This is the website of the American Heart Association and is certainly the gold standard for locating information about any type of cardiovascular complication. The website offered a “heart encyclopedia”, which contained a list of every cardiovascular complication and information about the pathogenesis and treatment of each. The explanations were very accessible and even those with no scientific background would be able to understand them. The website also had more detailed explanations and links to primary literature for health professionals or people with scientific backgrounds. An additional resource was the ability to link to the specific American Heart Association chapter of one’s hometown. Therefore, I was able to find the page for the Cleveland chapter of the AHA and find out what events were going on locally.

**www.healthgrades.org**

This is the website I would recommend to aid in finding a physician that is competent in treating a specific problem. Health Grades is a non-government organization that evaluates physicians and health centers based on patient outcomes. This tool can be used to compare the performance of physicians and health systems at any location. It is free to compare area health centers, but to reduce the evaluation to the provider level, you must pay a fee for the information. Some surprising information I obtained from this website was that patient outcomes at the most famous Cleveland area health centers (University Hospitals and The Cleveland Clinic) were average and not the best in the area. For example, Southwest General Health Center, located in Middleburg Heights, OH, has better short term and long term patient outcomes for coronary interventional procedures than either UH or the Cleveland Clinic. This was especially surprising for the Cleveland Clinic because, according to US News, it is the best center in the U.S. at which to receive cardiac care.
Age-Related Macular Degeneration
By Megan Louttit

Overview
Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a disease of the retina that causes loss of central vision. Central vision is used on a daily basis for reading, driving, and watching television. The part of the eye that is affected is called the macula, which allows you to see objects in detail. AMD is the leading cause of severe loss of vision in adults over 60. Risk factors include age, gender, race, family history, smoking, and diet. There are 2 forms of AMD: wet and dry. Dry AMD accounts for approximately 90% of cases. The most common early sign for dry AMD is blurred vision. There are 3 stages in dry AMD which can occur in either or both eyes: early, intermediate, and advanced. Early AMD is classified by several small drusen (yellow deposits under the retina) or a few medium sized drusen with no loss of vision. Intermediate AMD is classified by many medium sized drusen or one or more large drusen with potential blurriness in the center of their vision. Advanced AMD exhibits drusen along with a blurred area in the central line of vision with the potential for the spot to grow and/or become darker. The dry form can turn into the wet form. When blood vessels behind the retina begin growing under the macula, it is considered wet AMD. The vessels are usually fragile and leak blood/fluid which raises the macula, disturbing its normal positioning. The macular damage occurs quickly. Central vision loss can happen rapidly, and early stages of wet AMD are straight lines appear wavy. There are different treatments for the different types of AMD. For wet AMD, you can opt to have laser surgery, photodynamic therapy, or injections. Dry AMD can only be treated in the early and intermediate stages. The current therapy is taking antioxidants and zinc, which can slow the progression to the advanced stage. However, it should be noted that there is currently no cure for either form of AMD, but also the disease does not cause any pain to the patients.

Reviews
National Eye Institute
Rating: Excellent
This website is a wonderful resource for patients and their families, as well as researchers. The site provides a good overview of the disease, risk factors and causes, in addition to the various treatment options and current research. They also have links to eye care professionals to help you locate an ophthalmologist in the patient’s area. It contains nice diagrams on the parts of the eye along with color pictures of how someone with the disease would probably view the world compared to someone with normal vision. There is a frequently asked questions section that contains some helpful information along with what individuals can do to reduce their risks. Symptoms of the disease are given along with how the disease is detected. Treatment options are discussed in a manner understandable by the general population.

http://www.amdhelp.com/
Excellent
One thing I really liked about this site was on the homepage it gave you the option of
changing the text size. This is probably very helpful to the population set that would be looking for information on this disease. The information available here is stated in a very easy to read manner with different pages for different aspects people are looking into: getting diagnosed, treatment, eye exams, support agencies, helpful terms. The site is extremely easy to navigate and user-friendly.

**Macular Degeneration Partnership**  
http://www.amd.org/site/PageServer  
Good  
Although the site contained about the same information as the other sites, it was not as easy to navigate. Each webpage had only about a paragraph on it before you had to click on another link to finish reading information in that heading. They also seem to be more interested in getting people to contact them to join the organization or donate to their cause. Also the font on all the webpages was huge, making it tedious to scroll around, in addition to all the advertisements on the page which reduced further the space for text.

**Prevent Blindness America**  
http://www.preventblindness.org/amd/  
Good  
Again there was a lot of weblinks to change to a new page, with each only containing approximately a paragraph of information. One of the nice things on the site was a sound bite a reader could listen too. I thought this was nice, especially for people with vision problems trying to learn information; they wouldn’t have to read it off the page, simply turn their speakers on. One other aspect they offered was links for financial assistance for those who were affected.

**AMD Alliance International**  
http://www.amdalliance.org/  
Excellent  
This site contained detailed information about the disease and treatment. There also was a section for caregivers of the visually impaired and how they can better care for these people. Another section was specifically aimed for eye care professionals and researchers containing much more detailed information on all aspects of the disease. There were links to news articles as well as research studies going on and whether the patient may qualify for a new study.

**Treatment Facility**  
**Cleveland Clinic Foundation Cole Eye Institute**  
http://www.clevelandclinic.org/eye/patient_info/treating_amd.asp  
Almost any ophthalmologic surgeon can treat AMD. This was simply a local facility that has a large group of doctors treating many eye conditions. The institute opened in 1999 and is the newest, most state-of-the-art in the US, handling more than 140,000 patient visits per year. Many foreigners travel here to be treated. It has been ranked highly nationally be US News & World Report in addition to being ranked the best in Ohio.
Cushing’s Syndrome
By Stephen Hrinda

Background Information
Cushing’s syndrome occurs as a result of exposure to excess levels of the hormone cortisol for a prolonged period of time. Elevated cortisol levels in the body may be attributed to either exogenous (outside of the body) or endogenous (inside of the body) causes. Exogenous Cushing’s syndrome generally results from high doses of corticosteroid medications (iatrogenic, caused by the treatment) for an extended time intended to treat inflammatory diseases (arthritis, lupus, asthma), prevent rejection of transplanted organs, or reduce chronic pain. Conversely, endogenous Cushing’s syndrome may be due to an ACTH-secreting (adrenocorticotropic hormone which stimulates production of cortisol by the adrenal glands) adenoma in the pituitary gland, a cortisol-secreting adenoma in the adrenal glands, or an ectopic ACTH-secreting tumor typically in the lung, pancreas, or thyroid. The total incidence of Cushing’s syndrome has been estimated to be approximately 5 to 25 cases per million persons per year, primarily affecting individuals between 25 and 45 years of age and is nearly five times more common in women than men. Increased levels of cortisol have myriad effects in the body, including promotion of uncontrolled catabolism of bone (osteoporosis), muscle (weakness and fatigue), skin (thinning and easily bruised), and other organs; production of increased levels of precursors for hepatic gluconeogenesis and increased blood sugar levels similar to diabetes; immunosuppression; loss of fat mass from extremities and redistribution to trunk, face, and neck; increase in appetite and obesity; amenorrhea; decreased fertility and libido; excess hair growth (hirsutism); and hypertension due to cortisol augmenting the pressor effects of epinephrine and norepinephrine. Diagnosis may be completed by physical examination; blood, urine, or saliva tests; and computerized tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans.

For exogenous cases, the best available therapy is reducing dosage of corticosteroids and replacing with noncorticosteroid drugs to treat the underlying condition. For endogenous cases, common treatments include minimally-invasive surgical removal of the pituitary or adrenal adenoma or ectopic tumor followed by cortisol replacement medication; radiation therapy; or medications to control excess production of cortisol such as ketoconazole, mitotane, and metyrapone.

Rating System
Websites related to Cushing’s syndrome were evaluated on the basis of five criteria including overall utility of the website (ownership, ease of navigation, appearance, easy to understand, currency of information); accuracy and quality of information (definition of disease, prevention, causes, symptoms, diagnosis, prognosis, expected quality of life, treatment, statistics); provision of communication and facilitation of interaction (contact information, referrals to hospitals and physicians, communication with other patients; sources of support for patients); evaluation of patient options (treatment options, hospitals and physicians); and provision of appropriate external resources (relevant and functional links, access to
major publications, references to academic journals, updates regarding current research, clinical trials, and new treatments). A five-star system was used to grade each website with respect to the perceived benefit to the patient.

Cushing’s Support and Research Foundation*****
(www.csrf.net)
The Cushing’s Support and Research Foundation provides a comprehensive and actively updated website with an enormous amount of information. The CSRF provides all of the objective information commonly offered by other websites. In addition, the information is considerably more descriptive and is written in a manner that a patient with little or no medical background knowledge could easily understand. However, what sets this website apart from all of the others is its ability to function as an all-inclusive resource for patients. It provides articles written by doctors, a forum for patients to submit questions that will be answered by a doctor, letters from members, regional member contact information, articles regarding how to cope with Cushing’s, a list of doctors specializing in Cushing’s with contact information, current research studies, links to other resources, and a book list. Finally, the information on the website is provided and regularly updated by a medical advisory board composed exclusively of doctors specializing in surgery and endocrinology. (5 stars)

Cushing’s Help and Support*****
(www.cushings-help.com)
This website takes a total patient-centric approach to providing information and outreach to patients with Cushing’s syndrome. To begin with, this site provides information not only about the disease itself (such as the causes, diagnosis, history, symptoms, treatment options, and prognosis), but also information that is particularly useful to patients and their families (including doctor and hospital recommendations by location, nutrition and self help tips, an online medical journal, and expectations for treatment and surgery). Other valuable resources provided include an online newsletter with archives, guest speakers, message boards, online chatrooms, merchandise, webcasts, raising public awareness, and online biographies of patients complete with personal stories. Finally, the website is clearly updated on a regular basis and provides abundant links to other websites; contact information for other organizations and foundations, patients, doctors, and hospitals; citations to the most recent articles in academic journals; and plenty of medical diagrams and photos. The website is administered by the CUSH Organization, which has a medical advisory board composed of doctors specializing in Cushing’s syndrome, elected officers, and patient members; the organization meets regularly and even conducts fund-raising activities. The only downside is that the website is relatively slow due to the abundance of information, links to many different pages, and some non-functional aspects. In fact, this website would probably be overwhelming to a new patient who has recently been diagnosed with Cushing’s syndrome, particularly in deciding where to start. However, the site is an excellent resource for patients that provides all of the information necessary, successfully reaches out to help patients, and provides much needed subjective advice from both physicians and fellow patients. (5 stars)

Cushing’s Syndrome – Patient UK****
(www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/27000139/)
Patient UK prides itself on supplying current information online similar to that which would be disseminated to patients during consultations with physicians. Like the other websites, it does provide all of the fundamental information regarding Cushing’s syndrome such as functions of cortisol, how cortisol is regulated in the body, what causes abnormal cortisol levels, symptoms, diagnosis, prognosis, complications, and treatment options. In addition, the website provides contact information for organizations and foundations offering help, support, and advice to Cushing’s patients. Finally, for those patients desiring more than just the basic lay information, there are links to more comprehensive pages within the Patient UK website that provide more thorough medical information along with references to articles in academic journals and other websites.  (4 stars)

Pituitary Network Association – Disorders – Cushing’s Syndrome***
(www.pituitary.org/disorders/cushings_disease.aspx)
The Pituitary Network Association presents another general website with factual information regarding symptoms, causes, diagnostic tests, treatment options, and current research. However, in addition to the objective information, there are also some personal accounts written by patients that provide some special insight into the quality of life for a person who has Cushing’s syndrome. Unfortunately, the website does not provide links to any outside resources, nor does it seem to be updated very frequently with the most recent revision being one year ago. (3 stars)

Cushing’s Syndrome – MayoClinic.com***
(www.mayoclinic.com/health/cushings-syndrome/DS00470)
The Mayo Clinic offers a relatively simple, yet educational website with basic information regarding the symptoms, causes, screening and diagnostic procedures, possible complications, and treatment options for Cushing’s syndrome. The website contains current information within the past few months and provides some additional links to very similar websites. However, all of the information is completely objective and factual; therefore, it is not very unique and provides nothing to patients other than background information. Surprisingly, there is no patient outreach in any form, not even a reference providing contact information for physicians within the Mayo Clinic specializing in Cushing’s syndrome. (3 stars)

Cushing’s Syndrome***
(http://endocrine.niddk.nih.gov/pubs/cushings/cushings.htm)
The Endocrine and Metabolic Diseases Information Service has created a stereotypical informational website for Cushing’s syndrome that is extremely easy to navigate. It primarily focuses on presenting information about the symptoms, causes, diagnostics, and treatment options for Cushing’s syndrome. In addition, while the website provides some brief information regarding current research being done, it is unclear how recently the information on the website has been updated. Nonetheless, the website does provide links to other websites reviewed here (including CSRF), adequate contact information, and even a list of articles in academic journals that provide more information about Cushing’s syndrome (the only negative aspect is that all of the articles are over ten years old). (3 stars)

National Adrenal Diseases Foundation – Cushing’s Syndrome**
(www.medhelp.org/nadf/diseases/cushings.htm)
This website was made available by the National Adrenal Diseases Foundation, with all information provided by a single doctor who is the medical director of the NADF. While the website presents high quality information that can easily be understood by patients, it simply answers questions regarding Cushing’s syndrome, including basic information, causes, symptoms, diagnostics, reasons to consult an endocrinologist, quality of life with the disease, and treatment options. All of the information is completely factual. The website does not supply links to other websites providing more information about Cushing’s syndrome, nor is there any semblance of subjective information, contact information, or any form of patient support. Even though the website offers the basic information, there are no mechanisms for user interaction. Finally, because the most recent copyright was 2005, it is unclear how often the website is updated. (2 stars)
Schizophrenia
By Mekeshia Bates

Schizophrenia is a brain disorder that affects approximately 2.2 million American adults, or 1.1 percent of the population age 18 and older. This disorder disrupts the ability to accurately interpret the world around oneself. Schizophrenia impairs a person’s ability to logically reason, to organize and communicate thoughts, and to function in society. Symptoms usually manifest in early adulthood, often when a person is entering their most productive years. It is important to remember that a person with schizophrenia does not have a “split personality”, and almost all people are not dangerous or violent towards others when receiving treatment. The causes of schizophrenia have not been fully understood.

Diagnosis is based on both a clinical interview assessing the patient’s symptoms and a careful psychiatric history assessing the course and development of the illness. After excluding other disorders, ultimately the clinical presentation and history confirm the diagnosis of schizophrenia.

**Website Review Rating Scale: 1- poor, 2-fair, 3-good, 4-excellent**

The website review ratings are based on the following: appeal of the site, ease of navigation, links, special group needs met, and local providers/ support groups.

**Schizophrenia.com**
www.schizophrenia.com
**Rating: 4**
This website is a nonprofit source of education and support that is easy to navigate and provides easy to read information. Fact sheets are offered in eleven different languages and it provides links that give in-depth information on schizophrenia such as an overview of the disease, internet videos, brain pictures, good books and videos related to the disease, and support groups. For local information and support, there is a link to the local NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) organization. A discussion board exists for those with schizophrenia as well as the parents, siblings, children, and other significant others of those with the mental illness. A link to events and conferences held on schizophrenia is also included. There are advertisements for NARSAD (the mental health research association), medications to control symptoms of schizophrenia, and books related to the mental illness. This site does not disclose its ownership nor does it report the number of visits but even without this information it is a great website to learn about schizophrenia for the newly diagnosed or others.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**
www.nami.org
**Rating: 4**
NAMI is a national organization with state (www.namiohio.org) and local affiliates (www.namigreatercleveland.org). NAMI’s purpose is to provide education, advocacy, and support for persons with brain disorders and their families. The national site is the only one that has a link for schizophrenia. This link gives a general over of schizophrenia and is easy to navigate and very user friendly. There are also links for support on the state and local levels,
support for children and adolescents, online support and discussion groups, and multicultural support. NAMI also offers opportunities for advocacy. All of the information can be emailed to others for use and everything is available in Spanish.

**NARSAD- The Mental Health Research Association**  
[www.narsad.org](http://www.narsad.org)  
**Rating: 3**

NARSAD is a donor-supported organization for research on psychiatric disorders. The site is easy to navigate through and easy to read. A link is provided for information specifically on schizophrenia. A general overview is provided on defining schizophrenia, symptoms, and treatments. The site allows for this information to be emailed and an information line is provided for patients and families. Also there is a frequently asked question section that provides epidemiology information and contact information for clinical trials. This site had no information on local providers or support groups.

**The Cleveland Clinic Health Information Center**  
**Rating: 3**

The Cleveland Clinic provides information on schizophrenia that is easy to read and navigate through, however, the information on the site was last reviewed on 7/28/2003. It provides an overview of what schizophrenia is, diagnosing the disorder, causes, medications for treatment, and side effects of those medications. This site also provides a listing of information, support, and advocacy organizations. There is a link to the Department of Psychiatry and Psychology for treatment. This site, however, is not very appealing and is limited to only the basic information. It is not very interactive and has no pictures, frequently asked questions, self-help tips, or anything on research. It was also actually hard to find because it was not a site reached by doing just a web search on schizophrenia.
Breast Cancer
By Jarvis Joiner

Website Review Rating system: *-poor, **-good, ***-very good, ****-excellent

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy in women and the second leading cause of cancer death (exceeded by lung cancer in 1985). Breast cancer is three times more common than all gynecologic malignancies put together. The incidence of breast cancer has been increasing steadily from an incidence of 1:20 in 1960 to 1:7 women today. The American Cancer Society estimates that 211,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed this year and 43,300 patients will die from the disease. Breast cancer is truly an epidemic among women and we don't know why.

http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org**

This website was founded by a breast cancer survivor. This site contains common signs and symptoms along with stages of breast cancer that are explained in layman’s terms and is easy to understand. This site also provides information on breast health, current research and news on breast cancer treatments. The links were helpful and the graphics provided colorful attractions. I feel that this information was current and valuable; however some of the content felt like propaganda, with pictures of the founder and her many accomplishments.

http://komen.org ****

This site was founded by Nancy G. Brinker as a promise to her dying sister, Susan G. Komen, that she would do everything in her power to end breast cancer forever. Today, Komen for the Cure is the world's largest grassroots network of breast cancer survivors and activists fighting to save lives, empower people, ensure quality care for all and energize science to find the cures. Race for the cure has funded well over one billion dollars in cancer research and is the largest source of non-profit funds in the world. There are links for those who would like apply for grants, purchase brand products such as the pink ribbon symbolizing breast cancer research. I feel that this site contains just enough graphics and text to keep the reader interested. Koman is celebrating 25 years of cancer research and has recently updated its brand but not its mission…to eradicate breast cancer in the world!

http://www.cancer.org ****

Good site for cancer information, and allows the reader to select the level of information they would like to view from general to treatment specific information. Treatment options and discussion of each option is presented in easy to read vocabulary. This site is funded by the American Cancer Society, which is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer through research, education, advocacy, and service. With more than two million volunteers nationwide, the American Cancer Society is one of the oldest and largest voluntary health agencies in the United States. This site has received the HON compliance certificate. HON is the Health on the Net foundation and has eight
principles of conduct that must be met before a health website can achieved certification. Certification by HON is indicative of trustworthy, valid information.

http://www.mayoclinic.com***

This site has received the HON certification and is established by the Mayo Clinic. The Mayo clinic is world renowned for medical expertise and state-of-the-art treatment for chronic and acute illnesses. The breast cancer link has valuable information and is presented in easy to follow language. I found the coping skills link very helpful and felt that this can provide options for someone experiencing the diagnosis of breast cancer. As with all of the sites I reviewed some of the genetic information maybe a little overwhelming for patients without a medical knowledge base.

http://www.cdc.gov ***

The CDC The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is one of the 13 major operating components of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which is the principal agency in the United States government for protecting the health and safety of all Americans and for providing essential human services, especially for those people who are least able to help themselves. The featured items included on this government maintained site include fast facts and reducing risks for breast cancer. Publications were available for downloading for those who would like to print the information and take it with them. The site also contains more scientific information for researchers and practicing physicians. Low cost or free breast screening information is included on this site, but not easy to find.

http://www.medicinenet.com***

MedicineNet.com is an online, healthcare media publishing company written by physicians and allied healthcare professionals. It provides easy-to-read, in-depth, authoritative medical information for consumers via its robust, user-friendly, interactive web site. This site has HON certification and is owned and operated by WebMD. WebMD is very popular with healthcare professionals and lay people wanting to find quick, easy to read “cliff notes” on diseases and conditions. This site has a lot of graphics and advertisements which can be a little distracting. The breast cancer questionnaire is an easy tool to obtain personalized options; the site encourages the reader to take the finished tool to their physician. I felt that this site can provide fast trustworthy information for patients facing breast cancer and those needing more information on the topic.

http://www.nlm.nih.gov***

MedlinePlus brings together authoritative information from NLM, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other government agencies and health-related organizations. Preformulated MEDLINE searches are included in MedlinePlus and give easy access to medical journal articles. MedlinePlus also has extensive information about drugs, an illustrated medical encyclopedia, interactive patient tutorials, and latest health news. I felt that the site was primarily for savvy readers. Some one new to the topic of breast cancer or just wanted a cons ice
source of information would be disappointed. However, those who wanted a complete source of up-to-date cancer information and research and were familiar with the medical terms would be delighted with this site.

Local Care

http://uhospitals.org

http://ccf.org

Both local sites give the reader links to its cancer center. Uhhospitals.org is the website for University Hospitals of Cleveland. It is a NIH recognized cancer center and can give breast cancer patients much needed information on clinical trials and other treatment options. CCF.org is the website for the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, as with University hospitals, the Cleveland clinic allows the reader to make appointments and review current literature on breast cancer treatments. Clevelanders are fortunate to have both centers recognized by the National Institutes of Health and deemed a comprehensive cancer center.
Sarcoidosis
By Aabba Jain

Sarcoidosis is an immune system disorder that is characterized by small inflammatory nodules, granulomas. Though sarcoidosis can occur in any organ in the body it is more commonly found in the lungs and lymph nodes. Some common symptoms are fatigue, weight loss, blurry vision, aches and pains in the body, and shortness of breath. No known cause has yet been discovered for sarcoidosis, however, antibiotic therapy has been reported to be an effective treatment for lung and lymph manifestations of sarcoidosis but this therapy is not currently the standard of care.

The following websites were rated based on the relevance of information provided for patients and physicians, eye appeal of the website, ease of navigation, and links to other resources.

* Poor website  ***** Excellent website

**Sarcoidosis Center -- ***
http://www.sarcoidcenter.com/

The website is run by a pulmonologist who has an interest in sarcoidosis. It provides a link to a support center where patients can find links to hotlines to learn more about how to cope with sarcoidosis. The site offers links to specific descriptions of the disease depending on what the individual is interested in; however there was not that much information presented. It is useful for both patients as well as physicians since it not only defines and gives symptoms of the disease but also has reference books as well as different therapy methods that physicians can use. The site also provides a link to different sarcoidosis groups in the country as well as in the world for individuals to call for more information. However, the site itself did not offer much concrete information about sarcoidosis and yet asked to send donations for research.

**National Heart Lung and Blood Institute – Sarcoidosis  *****

This website is very well organized. It has categories that individuals can use to locate the specific areas where they want to find information from. Each section on the website is outlined and explained very clearly so individuals who do not have a background in medicine are able to understand. The website not only gives information about what sarcoidosis is, but also has information about treatment and how to maintain a lifestyle with it. Moreover, the website also has a section of extra links where people can find other websites with more useful information.

**MedlinePlus: Sarcoidosis -- ****
Though this website does not offer its own information regarding sarcoidosis, the website does offer numerous links to other useful websites that offer various types of information related to sarcoidosis. The website is visually pleasing and easy to follow and use. The website also has links that offer information about research that is currently being done which is useful for physicians who are treating patients with sarcoidosis. Additionally, the website provides links to a directory that offers contact information for various specialists in sarcoidosis and to various sarcoidosis organizations.

**MayoClinic.com – Sarcoidosis -- ****
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sarcoidosis/DS00251**

This website divides a sarcoidosis article into sections so people who come to the website can easily track which portion they want to read. This makes the website much easier to navigate and less confusing. Some of the sections on the website that were different than others are when to seek treatment, risk factors, and self-care. Also the website offers related links in some of the sections that may be helpful to the users to obtain more information on a particular subject of sarcoidosis.

**Local Resources for Care**
**The Sarcoidosis Center of Excellence at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation**
http://cms.clevelandclinic.org/sarcoidosiscenter/

The Sarcoidosis Center of Excellence (SCOE) is located at the Cleveland Clinic. It provides medical help for patients as well as educational information for physicians who treat sarcoidosis. SCOE also tries to spread awareness in the local area about the disease as well as offer help and advice to those who need it. Additionally, it is possible for people to make appointments to see specialists through the website as well as call and ask for more information.
Tuberculosis

By Georgina N. Bukenya

Tuberculosis (TB) is a common and deadly infectious disease caused by the Mycobacterium tuberculosis or Mycobacterium bovis, which most commonly affects the lungs, but can also affect the central nervous system, lymphatic system, circulatory system, genitourinary system, bones and joints. It is believed that over one-third of the world's population has the TB bacterium in their bodies and new infections are occurring at a rate of one per second. Not everyone who is infected develops the disease and latent TB infection is very common. Nonetheless, one in ten latent infections will progress to active TB disease which, if left untreated, will kill more than half of its victims. In 2004, 14.6 million people had active TB and there were 8.9 million new cases and 1.7 million deaths, mostly in third world countries. An increasing number of people in the developed world contract tuberculosis because their immune systems are impaired by immunosuppressive drugs, substance abuse, or HIV/AIDS. The rise in HIV infection levels and the neglect of TB control programs have caused a resurgence of tuberculosis. Drug-resistant strains of TB have emerged and are spreading. The World Health Organization declared TB a global health emergency in 1993. These websites have been ranked on a five star scale based on their value to an individual; diagnosed with tuberculosis. I would suggest that my neighbor visit the TB Clinic at Metro Health Medical Center in Cleveland and they can be reached on telephone number (216) 778-7800.

This is a great site with wide-ranging information on TB. It has good information on what TB is, how it is diagnosed, the treatment protocols and provides news and updates about TB and developments that affect treatment and elimination of the disease. The site also has links to TB related websites of the federal and state governments and organizations. It is easy to navigate, is informative, unbiased. It has information on where to go in the different states, but unfortunately only has contact information for the Ohio Department of Health based in Columbus.
****

Metro Health- Department of Medicine; TB Clinic
http://www.metrohealth.org/body.cfm?id=603&oTopID=603
This website focuses on the Cuyahoga County area which includes the Cleveland area. It has information that patients can use to know what to do if diagnosed with TB. It has information on what the Clinic does; treatment, investigation and case management for patients. It has information on the services available, the physicians and the staff to contact with questions or queries including the contact details. This I think is very helpful for a Cleveland resident who has just been diagnosed with TB.
****

World Health Organization- Stop TB Department
http://www.who.int/tb/en/
This is a comprehensive site with information and statistics on TB. It provides in-depth information on the disease, the Stop TB Strategy, the fact sheet of TB internationally, international standards of care and approaches to control. It has recent publications on TB and
contact information for the Stop TB Department of WHO. It offers information that a person diagnosed with TB would find helpful but it is more internally focused which may not be of particular use for a Cleveland resident.

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**American Lung Association**

http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK9O0E&b=35778
This website has information on tuberculosis, the symptoms, who gets it, how the disease develops and what a person diagnosed with TB should do. It has a fact sheet on TB and a link to where a patient can find locations of local affiliates, including Ohio. It is helpful in providing background information but unfortunately it does not provide information for an affiliate in Cleveland.

***

**Medline Plus**

This site is informative in that it provides information on TB, specifically, its diagnosis, symptoms, treatment, prevention and information on the clinical trials being conducted. It has links to State TB Control Offices and organizations dealing with TB. Unfortunately it does not offer specific information on local area providers.

***

**Wikipedia**

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuberculosis
The site is great for any one who wants comprehensive information on TB including its history, symptoms bacterial species, transmission, diagnosis, progression from TB infection to disease, treatment and prevention. The language used is easy to understand and the site is easily navigable.

***

**Ohio Department of Health- TB Prevention & Control Program**

This site states the mission and priorities of the Department and where it derives its mandate from. It has information on the services/activities carried out and it has a section that provides information on the history of TB. It also offers the contact information for the Department. It is not a very helpful site for someone diagnosed with TB. It may help them to know about the history of the disease, but not what they can do or who to see for treatment.

**
Esophageal Cancer
By Jessica Jensen

Esophageal cancer begins in the innermost lining of the esophagus and spreads outwards. A common cause of this cancer is when the lower esophageal sphincter fails and acid and digestive enzymes escape from the stomach – this is called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). If GERD continues for a long time, the normal squamous cells that line the esophagus are replaced with abnormal glandular cells – this is known as Barrett esophagus. Individuals with Barrett esophagus are at a highly increased risk to develop esophageal cancer (30-100 x normal risk). There are many other risk factors as well: age, gender, race, tobacco, alcohol, obesity, diet, hot liquids, occupational exposures, lye ingestion, achalasia, tylosis, and esophageal webs. It is estimated in 2007 that approximately 15,560 new cases of esophageal cancer will be diagnosed, and that about 13,940 deaths will result from esophageal cancer. The following websites provide information on esophageal cancer (ratings: ***** = excellent, **** = good, *** = fair, ** = okay, * = not good).

American Cancer Society ****
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/cri/content/cri_2_4_1x_what_is_esophagus_cancer_12.asp?sitearea=cri

This is a very useful website as it describes in detail what esophageal cancer is, causes and risk factors, prevention, early detection, diagnosis, and staging, treatment, how to talk with your doctor about it, and new research that is being done on esophageal cancer. This website also provided many statistics about who was likely to develop esophageal cancer and estimates of how many people will develop and die from esophageal cancer in 2007. There is even a bookstore link from this website where you can go to order materials to learn more about the subject.

Mayo Clinic *****
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/esophageal-cancer/DS00500/DSECTION=1

This website provided similar materials as the one from the American Cancer Society including: signs and symptoms, causes, risk factors, screening and diagnosis, complications, treatment, prevention, and self-care. It also provided information on coping skills and complementary and alternative medicines, which I found interesting. This website has links to other resources as well as a bookstore for more information. As the websites state, this is most common in older people. This generation is likely to be less apt with computers and I found this website to be easier to navigate through.

Cancer Answers *
I found this website to be much lower quality the previous two. It was only a small section of a larger transcript that had to be ordered to obtain the information. It did not look like a reliable website, and there were no photos anywhere. Only the most basic information was available, and nothing more.

Medline Plus *****

This is a very nice website. It is easy to navigate, and many sections are covered: diagnosis, symptoms, treatment, prevention, screening, and disease management. There were sections on clinical trials, research, directories of physicians, and glossaries that were most helpful. One of the best features of this website was that the major information was also available to Spanish.

MedicineNet ***
http://www.medicinenet.com/esophageal_cancer/article.htm

This website was a bit more cluttered that I would like. It contained relevant information but had too many advertisements. It contained similar information as the other pages, only in less detail. It also did not provide pictures.
Asthma
By Alida Gertz

Primary Website for Asthma Education 101

- http://asthma.snap9.com/
  This website is wonderful for people who are just setting out to learn about asthma. It covers everything you need to know including a comprehensive, yet easy to understand review of the current available medications and their pro’s and con’s

An outline of the website content includes the following:

1. Asthma - Info
2. Stages
3. Symptoms
4. Causes
5. Warning Signs
6. Health Risks
7. Prevention
8. Treatment
9. When to seek medical advise

It is the most succinct yet comprehensive and easy to understand source on asthma information that I have found.

Other Useful Websites

1. What are common asthma triggers/What you can do to reduce asthma triggers:
2. Asthma Organizations in the Midwest:
   a. http://www.asthma.umich.edu/coalition_connections/midwest.html
3. In depth Information on asthma for health care providers:
   a. http://www.clevelandclinicmeded.com/diseasemanagement/pulmonary/asthma/asthma.htm
   b. http://www.clevelandclinicmeded.com/diseasemanagement/pulmonary/asthma/asthma2.htm
4. Symptoms of Asthma:
5. Good list of online resources:
6. Info on why Cleveland Asthma Rates are higher than nationwide:
   a. http://clevelandhealth.info/localstats/topics/asthma/
7. List of Asthma Clinics in Cleveland:
Fibromyalgia
By Sara Abdollahian

Overview

According to the three websites that I reviewed, fibromyalgia (fye-bro-my-AL-gee-ah) is an arthritis-related condition that is characterized by generalized muscular pain and fatigue. It is a syndrome with an association of clinical features and a poorly understood etiology due to diagnostic difficulties. In 1990, the American College of Rheumatology finally legitimized fibromyalgia in the medical community by presenting its criteria for diagnosing it. These criteria include: history of widespread pain (pain on both sides of the body and above and below the waist) that is present for at least three months, and pain in at least eleven of eighteen tender-point sites. Currently it estimated that approximately 5-7% of the U.S. population suffers from Fibromyalgia.

The criteria for diagnosis are vague and confusing for physicians and patients who often misunderstand the compellation of symptoms. Most of the symptoms are common or overlap with those of other conditions, leading to extensive investigative costs and frustration for both the doctor and patient. There are no current laboratory tests available for diagnosing fibromyalgia. Doctors must rely on patient histories, self-reported symptoms, a physical examination and an accurate manual tender point examination. It is estimated that it takes an average of five years for a fibromyalgia patient to get an accurate diagnosis. Many doctors are still not adequately informed or educated about fibromyalgia. Many patients with this condition even find themselves told that their symptoms are not real, and that they are not ill despite their described pain and fatigue. While the underlying cause or causes of fibromyalgia still remain a mystery, new research findings continue to bring us closer to understanding the basic mechanisms of fibromyalgia. Most researchers agree that this syndrome is a disorder of central processing and show that genetic factors may predispose individuals.

One of the most important factors in improving the symptoms of fibromyalgia is for the patient to recognize the need for lifestyle adaptation. Also, becoming educated about fibromyalgia gives the patient a greater potential for improvement. Therefore I chose to evaluate the most top three most helpful websites that I found, as well as two popular medical website tools. The previous description of the syndrome comes from information provided in the three top websites that I found and described below. Hopefully this, and the website reviews will help those who have been diagnosed, or have yet to be diagnosed with fibromyalgia find answers about their condition.
Fibromyalgia Online Resources:

**National Fibromyalgia Association**

http://www.fmaware.org/

The National Fibromyalgia Association is a non-profit organization with a mission to “develop and execute programs dedicated to improving the quality of life for people affected by fibromyalgia.” Sponsored by Pfizer, the National Fibromyalgia Association’s website provides information that is clearly presented in a concise fashion. The colors and format are appealing to the viewer, assisting in making the abundant and sometimes conflicting information on this syndrome less overwhelming. The site provides a search option which further assists in finding answers to specific questions on the extensive topics within the website. There is a very helpful description of the disease which includes an explanation of the difficulties concerning prognosis and a lack of cure. The positive tone of the descriptions include a list of treatment options depending on the person-specific details of the syndrome’s afflictions, as well as disease management techniques and alternative health care options.

There are many links and organized on the left toolbar of the homepage that lead the viewer to an all-inclusive collection of active links to popular books, trials, contact information, sponsors, and support groups. These links are organized to cater to health care professionals and patients in order to assist them in finding the best possible treatments for each individual’s unique symptoms, government agencies that assist with the daily struggle resulting from disabling conditions, and even attorneys that can help patients receive benefits. I am sure that these extra resources are appreciated by those who suffer from this condition.

**National Arthritis Foundation**

http://www.arthritis.org/conditions/DiseaseCenter/Fibromyalgia/fibromyalgia.asp

This website provides a good, but brief overview of the syndrome’s diagnoses, causes, and treatment options. If viewers prefer a less detailed explanation of the syndrome, this is a very good site to visit. One thing unique to this site that I liked was the link to the information provided in Spanish, reaching a larger population of people with questions about fibromyalgia. There were also many links organized on the right-side menu that included information pertaining to the arthritis store, programs and services, and other information to answer viewer questions. The arthritis store provided links to books, exercise videos, and pamphlets that users can purchase. I would have preferred to see these items given away for free or at least with user reviews so that purchasers could make better informed decisions about their purchases. Perhaps even a direct link to amazon.com reviews of the materials would assist in sales of their items. Due to this store option, the site has a consumer feel to it rather than one of open discussion and unbiased information exchange.

The link to the fibromyalgia self-help course located in the same menu was not useful because it did not directly pertain to fibromyalgia; rather it sent the user back to the homepage and was simply a general resource to arthritis based afflictions. I would have preferred to see some links to outside resources if none were actually provided via the homepage.

One factor that did redeem this site’s score was the resource located under the other fibromyalgia heading on the right-side toolbar. “A Husband’s Story,” described the complications and struggles of living with someone who suffers from fibromyalgia, and could definitely serve as a means of comfort for those whose family members have it. I also appreciated the “Long Term Outcome Looks Up” link that described new research pertaining to the syndrome that is on the road to discovering fibromyalgia’s many mysteries.
Local Resource:
18151 Jefferson Park Road, Suite 103
Middleburg Heights, OH 44130
Toll-free: 1-866-443-4276
Phone: 440-260-9700

**Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, Inc.**
[www.fibroandfatigue.com](http://www.fibroandfatigue.com)

This website belongs to a consortium of fourteen Fibromyalgia and Fatigue centers nationwide. With one center located on the Westside of Cleveland, I thought it was particularly important to investigate. In addition to the background information that the other sites provided, this resource described the treatment options available in their centers in depth, providing real patient testimonials to support their treatment approaches. Their treatment occurs usually in six steps which include 1. Stabilization of the patient, 2. Mitochondrial enhancement, 3. Balance of hormones, 4. Treatment of infectious components, 5. Addressing unique etiologies, and 6. Providing additional individualized maintenance programs. Each of these steps is described, and seems flexible depending on each patient’s needs. There is even a way to register for an appointment online as you are reading the site!

Even before one sees a physician, with this site they are able to attend free seminars, read about the doctors that could treat them at their respective center, and subscribe to a free newsletter pertaining directly to fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. Even though this is a business, I feel that this website’s free information and ease of research is extremely helpful as a resource. I would have liked to see information about visit costs; however, even if one cannot afford a visit, the resources on this site will greatly assist with helping patients determine possible solutions to their affliction.

**Medical Website Resources:**

**Medline Plus**

This site provided a lot of information that was more concisely and extensively stated in the other websites. I found the information to be unorganized; making it difficult for the viewer to stay focused and find the necessary information in a timely manner.

**WebMD**

Last updated November 10, 2005, I found WebMD informative and easy to navigate. This site is a well known first resource for health information. If someone I knew had symptoms of any condition that were undiagnosed, I would first direct them to this site in order to narrow down the possibility before seeing their physician. I feel that this tool assists patients in determining if a doctor visit is at first necessary, and then types of questions they should be sure to ask once they get there. Although this should not be used to replace a visit to the doctor, it is a convenient and useful reference before and after a medical visit.
Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) is a neuro-degenerative disease characterized by progressive loss of cognitive skills, decreasing ability to perform activities of daily living, and changes in behavior. Definitive diagnosis of AD can only be made on autopsy; however, a clinical diagnosis can be made based on the individual’s history, clinical observation, and tests of memory and intellectual functioning over a series of weeks or months. Interviews of family members and/or caregivers are also crucial to making an accurate clinical diagnosis of AD.

The ultimate cause of AD is unknown and there is currently no cure. Stages of progression begin with early or mild changes in the affected individual’s level of energy and ability to remember things – at this point family members or caregivers do not necessarily notice these changes. In the middle or moderate phase of the disease the affected individual begins to need assistance with some activities while remaining independent for other simpler activities. In the severe or late phase of the disease, the individual becomes unable to perform even simple tasks independently and needs constant supervision. The average duration of AD is 7 to 10 years, but can be as short as 4 to 5 years or as long as 20 years.

Advancing age is the primary risk factor for AD – in fact, every five years after the age of 65 the probability of developing the disease doubles. While there are no known ways to prevent the disease since the ultimate cause is not known, ways to reduce risk are currently believed to include intellectual stimulation, regular physical exercise, regular social interaction, and a diet that includes high intake of fruits and vegetables, low levels of saturated fats, and supplementation with B-vitamins and omega-3 fatty acids.

As the U.S. population continues to age with baby-boomers now reaching their 60s, the burden of AD on the healthcare system will continue to increase. Alzheimer’s is currently the 7th leading cause of death and the 3rd most costly disease (behind heart disease and cancer) in the U.S. There are an estimated 4.5 million Americans with AD and projections put this number at 14.3 million by mid-century. The average lifetime cost of care for an individual with Alzheimer’s Disease is approximately $174,000, which illustrates the potentially catastrophic burden this could place on the healthcare system given the numbers of individuals projected to have this disease in the not too distant future.

Website Reviews
Website reviews were based on accuracy and completeness of information; ease of navigation through site; overall appeal of the site; links to related sites; and availability of bulletin boards or chat rooms to network with others affected by the disease.

Rating scale: Excellent; Very Good; Good; Fair; or Poor.
Alzheimer’s Association  
www.alz.org  
Rating: Excellent

The Alzheimer’s Association is the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to finding ways to prevent, treat, and eventually cure Alzheimer’s Disease (AD). Its mission is to eliminate AD through advancement of research, to provide support for all those affected by AD, and to decrease risk through promotion of brain health. Its vision is a world free of AD. Its website is an excellent source of comprehensive information on AD that is geared toward the general public and easy to read and understand. Topics covered on the site range from information on the disease itself to related issues such as financial and legal planning. An especially helpful feature on the website is an interactive “brain tour” that takes the reader through the parts of the brain affected by AD, and illustrates the pathophysiological process of brain deterioration over the course of the disease. Other useful features include: ability to change font size for easier reading; availability of information in Spanish; availability of a toll-free 24-hr helpline; links to local chapters; Carefinder tool to help find appropriate care based on individual needs and preferences; online community; operation of a library that provides a wide variety of free information services to the public; and information specific to children and teens. The site also provides information and links to related research for professionals providing AD care.

Alzheimer’s Disease.Com  
www.alzheimersdisease.com  
Rating: Fair

This website is sponsored by Novartis Pharmaceuticals USA, which is the US affiliate of the Swiss-based Novartis AG, and makes products providing treatment for a wide range of disease areas including Alzheimer’s Disease (AD). While the site provides rather comprehensive information on AD, it seems the main purpose is to promote the drug it developed for use in managing AD. While other websites stress the fact that there is no cure for AD, but state that medications may sometimes be used to try and slow disease progression, this website immediately states that prescription medications are used to treat AD and seems to downplay the fact that there is no cure. The clue to the commercial versus informational nature of this website can first be detected in its web address, which contains “.com” rather than “.org”.

Medline Plus: Alzheimer’s Disease  
Rating: Very Good

Medline Plus is a service of the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health that brings together information to help answer health questions and provide access to medical journals. It also provides information on prescription and non-prescription drugs, has an illustrated medical encyclopedia, and provides updates on the latest health news. The webpage for Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) basically serves as
a comprehensive portal to other sites and articles with information on AD, with the weblinks categorized by type of information being sought. As a portal-type site, it does not provide any on-line community services such as chat rooms or message boards – it is an information-only type site – however, many of the links provided take the reader to sites that do provide these types of services.

**NIH Senior Health**  
[http://nihseniorhealth.gov](http://nihseniorhealth.gov)  
**Rating: Very Good**

This is a website specifically developed for older adults by the National Institute on Aging and the National Library of Medicine, both part of the National Institutes of Health. One of the best features of this website is that it allows the user to easily change text size, to choose a contrast feature that darkens the screen so the text stands out more clearly, and to choose a voice-activation feature that will provide an audio version of the text. It is also very easy to navigate through this site, with each page containing bolded headings that are clearly stated and easy to click on, while keeping “clutter” to a bare minimum. The site covers many topics related to senior health, with AD being just one, and therefore does not provide as comprehensive a look at the disease as other sites. However, it does provide a link to the Medline Plus page on AD from which the reader can obtain more in-depth information.

**Mayo Clinic**  
[www.mayoclinic.com/alzheimers-disease/DS00161](http://www.mayoclinic.com/alzheimers-disease/DS00161)  
**Rating: Fair**

This web page is found on one of the Mayo Clinic's three main websites that provide information and services from the world's first and largest integrated, not-for-profit group medical practice. While it provides rather comprehensive information on AD, it is a bit technical and rather dry. The best feature on this web page was the “Ask an Alzheimer’s Specialist” feature in which frequently asked questions are listed along with answers provided by a neuropsychologist specializing in AD.
Lou Gehrig’s Disease (ALS)
By Kevin Blaine

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neuromuscular disorder that ultimately results in death. Nationally 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with ALS each year; notable persons with ALS have included physicist Stephen Hawking, baseball player Lou Gehrig, blues musician Leadbelly, and Chinese leader Mao Zedong. Prognosis is grim—80% mortality within 5 years of diagnosis. The etiology is unknown but may arise from the neurotoxic free radical superoxide. Symptoms begin insidiously with slowly progressive weakness in an isolated part of the body. Gradually the bulbar muscles become involved; depriving patients of the ability to eat and speak. Progressive UMN and LMN findings eventually culminate in death from respiratory failure. There is no treatment and the only approved medication, riluzole, prolongs life by only 2 months on average at a cost of over $12,000 per year. Due to rapid progression, the needs of persons with ALS and their families change quickly and dramatically. An efficient response depends on quality information. Many patients resort to the internet to help make decisions, plan for the future, and, once disability becomes more complete, for social interactions with the outside world.

Website Rating Scale:

***** Excellent
**** Good
*** Adequate
** Uninformative
* Misinformative

The ALS Association
http://www.alsa.org/
The ALS Association is a network of social workers, support staff, and resources for persons with ALS. The information on the site is comprehensive. It includes meeting times and contact numbers for support groups, recent news on ALS updated weekly, information on clinical trials, clinical management research, personal testimonies, and opportunities for support. Information is written in concise, lay language which is easily accessible to most readers, although readers with more advanced knowledge of ALS may find the information insufficient to answer the more complicated questions. Also the website interface is clumsy.

Rating: ****

Mayo Clinic
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/amyotrophic-lateral-sclerosis/DS00359
The Mayo Clinic site contains a lot of detailed information on the pathogenesis of ALS. Excellent graphics and text describe the various defects underlying ALS. The language is not technical but may be more advanced than many readers would prefer, and though the site contains information on clinical care, the section is superficial. Interestingly, the site links to the ALS Association website for more detailed support. The site interface is excellent and the site is easy to navigate.
Rating: **

eMedicineHealth
http://www.emedicinehealth.com/amyotrophic_lateral_sclerosis_lou_gehrig_disease/article_em.htm#Amyotrophic%20Lateral%20Sclerosis%20Overview

I was struck by the neutral language of the eMedicineHealth site, especially given such potentially devastating subject matter. The site is clearly written by a professional used to explaining complex medical terms to a lay audience. The site contains excellent background on the disease, summing up all the recent research in a concise pattern; indeed, it is the best summary I have seen. The information on clinical management is not thorough but hits the important points about palliative care, and links to support organizations. The site goes beyond the basics and answers questions that patients might have that healthcare providers rarely think to offer, such as surgical interventions for ALS (which many patients wonder about, although no option exists). The interface is user-friendly and well-organized.

Rating: *****

Muscular Dystrophy Association
http://www.mda.org/disease/als.html

Considering that ALS is one of the MDA’s major research avenues, comprising a third of all research dollars spent by the MDA, it is surprising that so little information is provided about ALS. MDA representatives attend many ALS clinics, host their own support groups, and provide resources like wheelchairs to ALS patients. The website contains only superficial information and offers grim advice dispassionately. The site contains more information on clinical trials, although the casual user may not be interested in clinical trials par se. Overall the site seems insensitive.

Rating: *