

Health Policy Newsletter

Volume 12 Number 3

September, 1999

Article 10

Physician-Focused Web Site Classification Scheme

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Suggested Citation:

McCartney LE, Ravindran S. Physician-focused Web site classification scheme. *Health Policy Newsletter* 1999; 12(3): Article 10. Retrieved [date] from <http://jdc.jefferson.edu/hpn/vol12/iss3/10>.

Physician-Focused Web Site Classification Scheme

The retrieval and dissemination of information to modern physicians has been revolutionized by the World Wide Web (WWW). Veteran health-care organizations and innovative health information companies use the WWW to offer medical information and services in a comprehensive, condensed and facile package. Particularly attractive to physicians, these applications can increase the cost effectiveness of medical practices by summarizing the burgeoning health-care advancements to make knowledge processing and application more efficient. The Office of Health Policy at Thomas Jefferson University developed a physician-focused Web site classification scheme to (1) determine the Web sites that are most comprehensive and relevant to physicians; (2) establish a comparison across Web site packages to allow the physician to evaluate the best package for their needs; (3) familiarize individuals with the scope of medical information available via the WWW; and, (4) provide physicians with criteria that can be used to rate new and revised Web site packages. By reviewing the literature and assessing different physician behavior patterns, several criteria were selected to measure the value of a Web site package. The table below details the four Web sites that most completely met all of the criteria (also listed). However, with the rapidly changing WWW, Web site packages will be born, merge and die. This physician-focused Web site classification scheme provides physicians with criteria that can be used to evaluate these packages into the future.

Comprehensive Health Portals Itemized by Selection Criteria

Portals		Medcast**	Medscape	WebMD	Physicians' Online
Mode of Connection	Hardware Needed	Computer w/ Internet Access	Computer w/ Internet Access	Computer w/ Internet Access	Computer w/ Internet Access
	Software Available	w/ fee	Web-based	Web-based	Web-based
	Included in Fee	Additional Fee	No	Additional Fee	Additional Fee
	Membership Fee	\$10.00/ month	\$29.95/ month	\$29.99/ month	Free
	Secure e-mail Account	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Continuing Medical Education	CME On-Line?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Access to Associations and Specialty Organizations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Practice Management Tools	Guidelines & Pathways	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Employment & Recruiting	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Referral Services	No	Yes	Yes	No
	On-Line Insurance Verification	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Personal Organizer	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Create Your Own Web Site	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Dictation and Transcription Services	No	Yes	Optional	No
Clinical Management Tools	Links to Medical Databases	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Access to On-Line Textbooks	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Links to Peer-reviewed Journals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	On-Line Purchasing of Books and Medical Supplies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Personal Financial Management Tools	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Customized Capabilities	Specialty-specific Information Available	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Information Further Customized for Individual Needs	Yes	No	No	No
Patient Resources	Disease-specific Information	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Patient Support Resources	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Medical News	Peer-reviewed Journal Articles	No	No	Yes	No
	Medical News Headlines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Information	Current Events	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Travel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Lifestyle	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

** Medcast services available through WebMD; merger pending as of press time.

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