

## Netting the Evidence: A ScHARR introduction to evidence-based practice on the Internet



Real-time evidence-based practice is much more efficient when information can be found and retrieved online. The profusion of web sites and other electronic information sources, however, is so great that it is easy to get lost if you stray beyond such standard databases as MEDLINE and the Cochrane Library or such favorites as the Web site of the Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine (<http://cebm.jr2.ox.ac.uk/>).

Andrew Booth, Director of Information Resources at the School for Health and Related Research (ScHARR) in Sheffield, England, United Kingdom, compiles and maintains "Netting the Evidence." Although not stated explicitly, the goal of the Web site is to provide a complete list of evidence-based practice resources available on the Internet. No criteria are given for inclusion of resources, nor is information provided about how they are identified.

This vast collection of links to key Web sites is arranged alphabetically. There are > 140 listings, each of which includes a short description of the resource with a link to it, and links to related resources are frequently provided. This extensive list is preceded by a link to "the latest articles on Evidence Based Medicine from the MEDLINE database."

Listings available on the Web site include the Arcus Statistical Package (downloadable statistical software), the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, a very useful Core Library of Evidence Based Practice, a Critical Appraisal Resource Guide, Evidence Based Medicine Training Packages, the Health Technology Assessment Database, and many others. It includes every resource that I have ever used and many of which I have never heard. Some links, such as Best Evidence, only show you how to order the CD-ROM and do not provide online access to the resource. 1 site that I particularly enjoyed was Quackwatch (<http://www.quackwatch.com/>). Its purpose is to "combat health-related frauds, myths, and fallacies."

This Web site is easy to use but not quick: The absence of a search engine for the site is a major drawback. And even when you find a site that looks promising, sometimes links are not available. For example, Resources for Evidence Based Surgery ([http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/public/infores/reso\\_ir.htm](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/public/infores/reso_ir.htm)), which is maintained by the Royal College of Surgeons of England, had many unusable links. Further, browsing can take a long time. I spent 30 minutes just getting a general idea of what was available (and printing it out covered 21 sheets of paper), so users in a hurry for information could easily become frustrated.

However, I have used this Web site in the past and will continue to do so. It is most useful as a tool for finding resources that you want to return to. When I find a good site, I bookmark it and then access it directly. One other shortcoming of the site is the lack of explicit inclusion criteria for entries. In some ways it reminds me of a bookstore: It assembles a wide variety of resources in 1 place, and you can visit it to choose a few for your regular use. But it also has a bookstore's drawbacks: You cannot be sure that it contains everything you might need, it takes time to find what suits you, and you might have to order some items and pay for them.

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*Netting the Evidence* is available at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~scharr/ir/netting.html>.

**Ratings for this resource:**  
Methods/Quality of information: ★★☆☆☆  
Clinical usefulness: ★★☆☆☆