



Networking: the Webscout

by Amanda Bennett

Regulatory affairs is the hub of the modern pharmaceutical industry. The link between medical writing and regulatory affairs is strong because many of the documents prepared by medical writers go into the regulatory dossier. However, it can be difficult to find regulatory information on the web that is indexed in a logical, efficient manner - the information is there but how can we access quickly and efficiently what we need? Try the site below; it's one of the most comprehensive and well structured I have found.

<http://www.regsource.com>

Regsource.com is a portal organising worldwide regulatory, clinical, toxicological, CMC and other drug/device development-related information (including complete European regulatory coverage as well as extensive clinical research information). It also provides regulatory affairs-related Federal Register notices indexed by subject area, links to regulatory guidance documents, laws and regulations, clinical research information, and other useful information.

For information about Rx and OTC drugs, the next two links should be all you need:

<http://www.rxlist.com>

The RxList site has been published since 1995 and is now part of the Health Central network of health sites. It provides a "fuzzy" search facility for over 5,000 drugs, identifying the generic and brand names, linking to detailed monographs for the most important entries. There is full online access to Taber's Medical Encyclopaedia and even help on how to embed the RxList search tool into your own website.

<http://www.bnf.org>

Hit the BNF 40 link to access the September 2000 update - you will need to have Java enabled on your browser. Compiled with the advice of clinical experts, this essential reference provides up-to-date guidance on prescribing, dispensing and administering medicines. It details all medicines on the UK market, with special reference to their uses, cautions, contra-indications, side effects, dosage and relative costs.

The following site should also be high on your list of favourites:

<http://www.merck.com/pubs/mmanual/>

The Merck Manual has become the world's most widely used general medical text and is available on their website free of charge. Furthermore, a comprehensive index of normal laboratory values can be found at: www.merck.com/pubs/mmanual/tables/296tb2.htm.

The next two sites provide a broad reference for medical and scientific usage:

<http://www.dianthus.co.uk/resources/abbreviations/abbreviations.htm>

This database contains definitions of many abbreviations used in medicine. A single input box allows you to search the database for a specific abbreviation, or browse all abbreviations beginning with a particular letter.

<http://www.graylab.ac.uk/omd/index.html>

The Gray Laboratory Cancer Research Trust website is simple and well organised. Of particular interest is the online medical dictionary containing over 46,000 references to terms from medical science. It includes: acronyms, jargon, theory, conventions, standards, institutions, projects, eponyms, history, in fact anything to do with medicine or science.

For those who, like me, get nervous when expected to write convincingly about pharmacokinetics, the next two sites might provide some help:

<http://pharmacy.creighton.edu/pha443/pdf/default.asp>

An entire textbook for an introductory pharmacokinetics course has been made especially for publication on the web.

<http://gaps.cpb.ouhsc.edu/gaps/pkbio>

Another full online pharmacokinetics and biopharmaceutics textbook. Also on the site are tools that will create linear and semi-log graphs. There's even an online calculator that will do eight different calculations.

Writing in the sciences requires you to use standardised text structures. For some useful tips have a look at the following:

<http://stipo.larc.nasa.gov/sp7084/index.html>

How do you punctuate a single sentence that includes an equation? What can you do to remain within a 200-word limit for abstracts? Well, NASA has kindly provided a source for you: Mary K. McCaskill's Grammar, Punctuation, and Capitalisation - A Handbook for Technical Writers and Editors is online in its entirety. You too can learn to punctuate from NASA!

http://www.wma.net/e/policy/17-c_e.html

On 7 October 2000, the 52nd WMA General Assembly unanimously approved an amended version of the Declaration of Helsinki. It is the fifth time that the document, acknowledged as the cornerstone of research ethics, has been revised since it was drawn up in 1964.

If you should come across an interesting or useful website that you think fellow writers would enjoy, please send the URL of the site to Bennetta@iconuk.com. Also, let me know if there is a particular area or topic that you would like to see included.

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Those of you who haven't filled out your EMWA questionnaires yet, please do so and return them to B Drees as soon as possible.

MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN!