Using Technology: Some Internet Resources on Aging

Carol L. Howe, MD, MLS, Information Services Librarian, Arizona Health Sciences Library, and Clinical Assistant Prof. of Medicine, Section of Geriatrics, University of Arizona College of Medicine.

Included below are some recommended websites dedicated to improving the health of older adults by providing reliable information and useful tools and educational materials on aging related topics. Although the sites have been divided by audience—Clinicians; Educators; and Patients/ Consumers; there is wide overlap and learners across the spectrum will find valuable material at all of these sites.

For Clinicians:

Society for Hospital Medicine (SHM) Clinical Toolbox for Geriatric Care:
http://www.hospitalmedicine.org/geriresource/ toolbox/howto.htm

This toolbox was created by the Society of Hospital Medicine's Geriatric Task Force, an interdisciplinary team of clinicians and educators. Supported by the John A Hartford Foundation and implemented through the American Geriatrics Society "the goal of the project was to provide Hospitalists with a compendium of resources or 'toolbox' to facilitate and improve inpatient care of the elderly." The toolbox is extremely user friendly and is divided into the following sections:

- General Resources for Inpatient Elder Care
- Mental Status Tests: Dementia, Delirium & Depression.
- Functional Assessment Tests: Informant Based
- Mobility Assessment Tests: Performance Based
- Pain Assessment
- Pressure Ulcers
- Practice Guidelines
- Nutrition

Each section then provides a submenu of validated assessment tools including its context for use, strengths, limitations and then an easily downloadable version of the full resource. For example, under "Mental Status Tests: Dementia, Delirium& Depression," a provider has ready access to, among others-- the Clock Drawing Test/Mini-Cog Assessment; the Confusion Assessment Method (CAM); the short form of the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) and a Restraint Alternative Menu.

The Clinical Toolbox for Geriatric Care is a free resource requiring no registration or sign-in. It is a compendium of useful, quick, validated assessment tools which will help inform the care of inpatients and outpatients alike by clinicians and students from many disciplines providing care to older adults.

Geriatrics and Gerontology Health Topics Web Site
http://www.ahsl.arizona.edu/topics/geriatrics/index.cfm

This continuously updated website is hosted by the Arizona Health Sciences Library at the University of Arizona with support from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation and the Arizona Geriatric Education Center. It features the most recent evidence based articles and other resources addressing the major geriatric syndromes such as frailty, deconditioning and incontinence. "PubMed Alerts" -- pre-formulated and automatically updated searches on key aspects of these syndromes are provided. Information on broader topics such as Aging Demographics, Health Literacy, Clinical Trials recruiting older patients, Consumer Resources and Professional Associations are also featured.

For Educators:

Portal of Geriatric Online Education (POGOe)
http://www.pogoe.org

POGOe was initiated in 2004 as a repository for educational materials generated by medical schools receiving grants from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation through its Aging and Quality of Life Program, whose goal is to improve "the quality of life for America's elderly by preparing physicians to provide better care for frail older people."[1] POGOe is now managed by Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in partnership with Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, on behalf of the Association of Directors of Geriatric Academic Programs (ADGAP).

POGOe houses a steadily growing collection of free educational materials "in various e-learning formats, including lectures, exercises, virtual patients, case-based discussions, simulations, as well as links to other resources." It also offers a unique concept identifier and search engine (Knowledge Map) developed by Vanderbilt University, a user-friendly submission process, links to geriatric resources, collaboration tools such as wikis and blogs, a secure site for learner assessments, and an "Ask the Informationist" feature in which clinicians and students can post compelling clinical geriatrics questions which are then answered in depth by a geriatrician/informationist with both medical and library science training. All the materials on POGOe are currently being mapped to the AAMC's recently developed 26 Minimum Geriatric Competencies for Graduating Medical Students.

[1]*Donald W. Reynolds Foundation website. http://www.dwreynolds.org/ Programs/National/Aging/Aging.htm. Accessed July 7, 2009.*

The University of Iowa Geriatric Education Center
http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/igec/

This site is a portal for multiple educational opportunities created by the University of Iowa Geriatric Education Center. It offers material for both learners and educators at all levels. While some tabs lead primarily to internal opportunities such as their current *Geriatric Lecture Series*, most are widely available to all.

Using Technology

One of the most useful for educators, clinicians and health care trainees alike is their *E-Learning for Licensed Professionals* site. Highlights include: *GeriaSims*—providing very interactive, in-depth virtual patient simulations covering a broad range of geriatric issues such as Delirium, Failure to Thrive and Palliative Care (to name just 3 of the 9 available modules). Each takes between 45 minutes and 1 hour to complete and is available, for a small fee for CME or can be accessed at no charge for academic and training use. Also offered in this section are: *GeriaFlix & GeriaTrax* –streaming audio and digital video presentations on 83 different geriatric topics divided into 5 general categories (General Principles of Aging, Approach to the Elderly Patient, Geriatric Syndromes, Geriatric Psychiatry, and Common Geriatric Diseases, Disorders, and Health Concerns). Additionally there is a *Geriatric Consult Service Curriculum* which was developed for the University of Iowa's Internal medicine residents rotating on the Geriatric Consult Service. These modules are helpful not just for house staff but for the full range of students and providers caring for hospitalized elderly patients.

The University of Iowa Geriatric Education Center also offers e-learning materials for certified professionals including courses and modules designed for CNAs, long-term care and direct care workers.

Outlined above is just a small sample of multiple invaluable educational tools and experiences available through the University Of Iowa's Geriatric Education site. It is well worth jumping right from this brief introduction to their website for further exploration.

For Patients/Consumers:

MedlinePlus: Seniors
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/seniors.html

MedlinePlus is created and maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Donald A.B. Lindberg, Director of the National Library of Medicine sums up this vast resource as follows: "MedlinePlus has extensive information from the National Institutes of Health and other trusted sources on over 750 diseases and conditions. There are directories, a medical encyclopedia and a medical dictionary, easy-to-understand tutorials on common conditions, tests, and treatments, health information in Spanish, extensive information on prescription and nonprescription drugs, health information from the media, and links to thousands of clinical trials. MedlinePlus is updated daily and can be bookmarked at the URL: medlineplus.gov. There is no advertising on this site, nor does MedlinePlus endorse any company or product."

MedlinePlus has an extensive search engine that finds information across all resources and formats offered. Those who prefer to browse can explore *Health Topics, Drugs & Supplements; Encyclopedia; Dictionary; News; Directories;* and *Other Resources*. Under Health Topics, one can hone in on the "Seniors" Section for targeted information on a vast array of issues from Elder Abuse to Heart Diseases to Wrinkles. This is a multilayered resource with material written for individuals at many levels of literacy and expertise, but all with the health consumer in mind as the target audience. There are materials not only in Spanish but in Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Somali and Vietnamese as well.

AZHealthInfo.org
http://www.azhealthinfo.org/showPage.
cfm?pageID=134&level=2

Much more Arizona specific than MedlinePlus, this page, one of many on AZHealthInfo.org, offers links to "Arizona Websites," "Organizations," "Minority health Websites," "Disease-specific Websites in Arizona" as well as "Links to National Websites,"—all focused on providing health information to and about older adults in Arizona. To avoid typing in the long URL above, go to www.azhealthinfo.org and type "Senior Health" into the Search Box.

AARP: Internet Resources on Aging
http://www.aarp.org/internetresources/

This site is maintained by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and all entries are reviewed every six months. These over 900 resources cover not only health related issues but include a wide variety of areas of interest for individuals aged 50 and over. Among subjects included, for example are *Government, Legislation, and Public Policy, Leisure, Learning, and Personal Growth, Death and Dying,* and *Aging of Special Populations*, to name just a few.

"The web sites in AARP's Internet Resources on Aging are chosen for their usefulness for older adults and their families, as well as for researchers, students, and professionals in the field of aging. Most of the sites are produced by government agencies or nonprofit organizations. Commercial sites are not included unless they contain a substantial amount of free information that is interesting to a wide spectrum of older adults."