

ON THE NET

Multilingual medicine in the global village

As the communities we live in become increasingly cosmopolitan, online resources are being developed to help physicians, nurses, medical translators and others deal with our global village.

Several are multilingual sites. The European Commission has sponsored compilation of the Multilingual Glossary of Technical and Popular Medical

patient encounters for any combination of German, English, Spanish, French and Italian, while the Medical Foreign Language Electronic Phrasebook from the Department of Anesthesia at UCLA (www.gasnet.org/reference/phrasebook) features useful phrases and sample consent forms for anesthesia in 5 languages, including Hebrew and Polish.

Single-language dictionaries include one for English-Japanese (www.pmcguam.com/resource/japandic.htm), while the Medical American Sign Language Phrasebook (www.angelfire.com/pa3/ecarpenter/ASLphrasebook.htm) has been compiled to help health professionals communicate with deaf patients.

Extensive links to general foreign language dictionaries are supplied by YourDictionary.com (www.yourdictionary.com), the Virtual Pharmacy centre of Martindale's Health Science guide (www-sci.lib.uci.edu/HSG/Pharmacy.html) and 1000Dictionaries.com (www.1000dictionaries.com), which also collects medical subspecialty dictionaries.

Of course, the most useful phrasebook is always the one close at hand. The Riverside Medical Centre's Peripheral Brain site offers Medical Span-

ish for Palm (<http://pbrain.hypermart.net/medfiles.html>). A search for "dictionary" on any of the handheld software distributor sites, PalmGear (www.palmgear.com), Handango (www.handango.com) or Memoware (www.memoware.com) turns up a wealth of downloadable dictionaries, although there is still a paucity of dedicated medical ones.

Finally, discussions about the language issue are beginning in the literature. In the July 2000 issue of the *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, Barbara Schloman discusses ways to break through "the foreign language barrier." Among the new methods being introduced are automated translation systems (nursingworld.org/ojin/infocol/INFO_4.HTM). — Alison Sinclair, CMAJ



Terms in Nine European Languages (allserv.rug.ac.be/~rvdstich/egloss/welcome.html). It provides translations of 1830 terms in languages ranging from English, Dutch and German to Portuguese, Spanish and Danish.

Meanwhile, the Medlingua project (www.medlingua.com) provides matched phrasebooks for a variety of

BMJ on PubMed Central

In January, the *British Medical Journal* became the world's first general medical journal available online at PubMed Central, the repository for reports in the life sciences that is sponsored by the US National Institutes of Health. The site (www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov) can be accessed without restriction for free. Only *BMJ*'s scientific papers will appear here; the full journal and extras such as rapid-response letters will continue to appear on the *BMJ* site (www.bmj.com). In a Jan. 6 editorial, the *BMJ* editors state: "We want to align ourselves with an initiative which, if successful, will benefit science and so clinical medicine and patient care" (2001:322:1-2; www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/322/7277/1). Others have reservations. The *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2000;133:841-4) recently explored issues underlying opposition, including publishers' fears about undermining their subscription base.

Journals currently posting their content on PubMed Central include *Breast Cancer Research* and journals published by a new electronic publisher, BioMed Central. *CMAJ* has already offered support for the initiative (*CMAJ* 2000;162[4]:481; www.cma.ca/cmaj/vol-162/issue-4/0481.htm) and expects to post research articles on the PubMed site later this year. *CMAJ* has been available in full text online, with no access barriers, since July 1999 (www.cma.ca/cmaj). — Alison Sinclair, CMAJ

Canadian specialist joins elite US body

Dr. Ian Stiell, the first full professor in the Division of Emergency Medicine at the University of Ottawa, has been inducted into the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academy of Sciences. The 1380-member institute has 56 foreign members, and only 3 are from Canada.



Dr. Ian Stiell

Stiell, who is probably best known for his role in developing the Ottawa Ankle Rules, graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 1975 and joined the Emergency Department at the Ottawa Civic Hospital in 1981.

Dr. Garth Dickinson, associate editor of the *Canadian Journal of Emergency Medicine*, says Stiell is responsible for setting a "new standard for the development of clinical decision rules in medicine."