common (29.1% of POV), followed by RD (16.1%). No differences were observed between communities.

Conclusion These findings show that RD are the most common reason for POV (1 in 5 visits), mainly in the productively active age groups.

Education

SAT0225 A NOVEL WEB BASED RHEUMATOLOGY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE – INTERACTIVE COMPUTERISED CASE STUDIES FOR UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

¹AS Wilson, ²GD Kitas, ¹SJ Bowman, ¹P Llewellyn, ¹PA Bacon, ¹SP Young. ¹Rheumatology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK; ²Rheumatology, The Guest Hospital, Birmingham, UK

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Background We have applied the principal that the undergraduate curriculum should have a reduced burden of factual information and learning through curiosity should be encouraged,¹ to the education of our rheumatology students.

Objectives We have applied advances in computer technology to develop a web based educational strategy and evaluated its use from the perspective of the student/user.

Methods A teaching needs assessment conducted on a cohort of 30 students prompted the development of a novel interactive case studies programme, accessible through the internet. This programme utilises active server page technology (TM) reading from a database of case study information (anonymised). The user can select predefined questions, perform a virtual physical examination and gain diagnostic information by requesting laboratory tests. The user is then required to make a diagnosis and select an appropriate treatment regimen for that patient. To introduce realism, performance is evaluated by an indication of the patients outcome and the financial expenditure incurred for their consultation. Usage data was collected from online questionnaire and by computer generated log file analysis.

Results All students agreed that computer based learning was a useful adjunct to traditional teaching and greater than 95% expressed strong support for the use of computerised case studies. All questionnaire respondents (n = 17) agreed that the computer programme was well organised, realistic and that they had learnt from the experience. Although this teaching aid is primarily aimed at our local teaching hospitals, log file analysis indicates that there have been 239 visits to the site (181 unique) from North America, Europe, Asia and Oceania, suggesting a widespread interest.

Conclusion This novel interactive web based programme, based on real life patient information, will serve as a teaching resource for our allied hospitals and introduce some variety into more formal teaching practices by promoting self-learning. The techniques employed could be adaptable to other situations which would benefit from increased user interaction and in a dispersed learning environment.

REFERENCE

- 1 General Medical Council report "Tomorrow's Doctors", 1993

SAT0226 A REVIEW OF AN INTERNET BASED 'ARTHRITISHELP' RESOURCE: (HTTP://RHEUMA.BHAM.AC.UK)

¹AS Wilson, ²GD Kitas, ¹I Lal, ¹P Llewellyn, ¹PA Bacon, ¹SP Young. ¹Rheumatology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK; ²Rheumatology, The Guest Hospital, Dudley, UK

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Background The Internet is an important way of delivering medical information to assist in improving patient's self-management of their disease.

Objectives We have established an Arthritis education website ('Arthritis Help') and investigated its use over two years.

Methods Computer generated log file analysis and online questionnaire were used to create usage profiles of our web site.

Results An average of 288 people visited our site each day predominantly, but not exclusively, from America and the UK (49% of users). The typical questionnaire respondent (n = 770) was a 30+ year old American female with arthritis, accessing the Internet from home. They had previously obtained information from medical staff or in written form but were now more likely to use the Internet. 167 out of 585 respondents found our site to be useful prompting them to seek more information (29%), change their behaviour or engage in more effective discussions with their physician (15%). 427 people responded to our comments section of the questionnaire of which 333 made clear suggestions. 21% of these respondents were enquiring about a specific medical condition or requesting more information on that condition. 20% wanted more detailed information about rheumatoid conditions, treatments or drug information. 9% wished to see more information on 'alternative treatments' whilst diet, exercise, new treatments, a questions and answers section, a section to air shared experiences and links to other information formed 5–6% of respondents suggestions.

Conclusion This data indicates that it is possible to use the internet to deliver medical information to its target audience and that this process can have some impact on the way disease is self-managed. This information may aid more focused web-site design to maximise use and the potential benefits from such a resource.

SAT0227 AN ACADEMIC ARTHRITIS WEBSITE IS MOST FREQUENTLY UTILISED FOR ARTHRITIS NEWS AND TREATMENT INFORMATION

JM White, JM Bathon, AK Matsumoto. Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

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Background Medical and pseudo-medical information sites are the most heavily trafficked sites on the Worldwide Web. The Hopkins Arthritis Web Site was launched in late December 1998 to provide credible information about arthritis and its treatment to health care providers and patients.

Objectives Our goal was to evaluate the topics most frequently accessed by visitors to the Site.

Methods The information data base on the Site consists of a large body of 'static' information, as well as two interactive forums. The number of 'requests' for each page was monitored by Web Trends Enterprise Reporting Server. The number of requests per page was adjusted for number of months that the page was live, and sorted by topic into 1 of 6 categories. Requests were readjusted for number of pages per topic and calculated as a percent of total requests. Data were based on statistics compiled for the year 2000.