

Palliative Care and End-of-Life Care World Wide Web Resources for Geriatrics

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ABSTRACT. As the average life span of Americans increases, there is a tremendous need for geriatric-specific information and resources, especially for those older adults with life-limiting illnesses. Emerging literature underscores the differences in palliative and end-of-life approaches between younger and older adults in treating symptoms, understanding issues related to psychosocial and spiritual well-being, and alleviating caregiver burden. Hundreds of internet sites currently exist that pertain to geriatrics, and health professionals now have access to evidence-based clinical care guidelines, guides for education and training, and networks to support patients and their families. Even consumer-oriented organizations have assumed responsibility for informing patients and families and outlining supportive care services for patients and families. This paper reports the results of a systematic evaluation and critique of 15 websites, and summarizes their unique contributions clinical care guidelines, teaching materials and training opportunities, effective models of care, and advice on dealing with the complex emotional, social and financial issues facing older adults at the end-of-life. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2006 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS. Internet, palliative care, hospice, end-of-life, aging, pain, geriatrics, World Wide Web

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Journal of Pain & Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy, Vol. 20(3) 2006

Available online at <http://www.haworthpress.com/web/JPPCP>

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doi:10.1300/J354v20n03_12

INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web (WWW, Internet) is rapidly becoming a common place where consumers seek knowledge about health issues. Health care professionals also rely on the WWW to access resources for education, and to assist them with patient care. Electronic information available to the general public is unparalleled to any other form of informational media. A national survey estimates that 72% of adults in the U.S. or 145 million people use the internet, and 66% of these internet users have searched online for health or medical information.¹ From a smaller sample of 2,200 adults accessing the internet, 25% were 65 years of age or older.¹ The growing population of older persons has created a greater need and capacity for information specific to aging, yet little is known about how older adults use web-based information, especially when they have life-limiting illnesses. Similarly, there is paucity of literature to document the frequency with which health professionals access information from internet sites and the extent to which resource are applied in clinical practice and education.

A report released in 2004 indicates that there are over 300,000 websites about geriatrics, and as many as 175,000 focused on education.² This expansion of web-based resources for geriatric populations marks substantial progress in disseminating valuable scientific information, highlighting effective models of care, improving education and training programs for health care professionals, and preparing patients and families to deal with the difficult and sensitive issues at the end-of-life. Emerging literature underscores the differences in palliative care and end-of-life approaches between younger and older adults in treating symptoms, understanding issues related to psychosocial and spiritual well-being, and alleviating care burden.³ Older age places significant burdens on decision-making capabilities and communication if dementia and functional impairments are present, and as result the capacity to seek out and comprehend information can differ considerably from younger persons.⁴

Because there are no quality controls to regulate the subject matter posted on these sites, it is important that health care professionals be familiar with reputable and authoritative sites

that offer the best sources of pertinent and accurate information for patients and their families, and clinicians. Here, we present a systematic evaluation of several websites and briefly summarize the major contributions that each offers to raising awareness of geriatric-specific issues and concerns, advancing practice, education of health professionals, patients and families, research, and access to supportive care and services for older adults.

LITERATURE SEARCH

A pursuit of WWW resources performed using common search engines such as Google and Yahoo as well as key search terms such as "palliative care," "hospice," "end-of-life," "pain," "geriatrics," and "aging" revealed over 200,000 web hits. A more narrowed search using domains of ".gov," ".edu" and ".org" uncovered a significant number of websites that provide high quality scientific and practical information to promote quality care for older adults. From these, 15 websites that had not been previously reported in this journal's WWW series or evaluated for relevance to geriatric populations were selected, including consumer-oriented sites popular with older adults.

WEBSITE EVALUATION

Evaluation criteria were established to appraise the presence and completeness of content appropriate for both consumers and health care professionals. After independently reviewing each site for information on pain, palliative, hospice and end-of-life care, clinical care guidelines/tools, research and health care policies, and resources for patients and families, the authors reached consensus regarding similar themes. Key content identifiers specific to palliative, hospice and end-of-life care for aging populations were grouped into four categories: (1) scientific information and supporting evidence, (2) pain and palliative care perspectives, (3) professional content, and (4) resources for patients and caregivers. Further subdivisions of these content areas elucidate the vast amount of resources and highlight the innovations in electronic information re-

lated to geriatric care (see Table 1). For example, scientific information and supporting evidence are defined by the availability of scientific references and citations, evidence-based guidelines and consensus reports, assessment and research tools, peer-reviewed journal publications either on the site or through web-based links. Pain and palliative care perspectives, as these relate to older adults, include links to hospice, information on advanced directives and care planning, spiritual issues/concerns and cultural orientation or competency, and pain management.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Administration on Aging ***www.aoa.gov***⁵

The Administration on Aging (AoA) web site is maintained by the Federal Government to keep health care professionals and consumers informed about health and social issues facing older adults. Elders and their families, and health care professionals can learn about the AoA Alzheimer's Demonstration Program, which strives to develop models of care and improve the responsiveness of home and community-based care systems for persons with Alzheimer's disease (AD). Brief fact sheets describe the program, and it is possible to identify states currently funded for AD initiatives and their notable accomplishments, which can be found in the "Alzheimer's Resource Room." A series of "Programs that Work" constitute several evidence-based approaches that are creatively packaged in captions such as "Making Sense of Memory Loss," "Reducing Disability in Alzheimer's Disease (RDAD)," and the "Savvy Caregiver." The "Savvy Caregiver" involves a 12-hour training program usually taken in 2-hour sessions over a 6-week period; a detailed trainer's manual, a caregiver manual, a training videotape, and a CD-ROM are obtainable.

There is also information on elder rights and resources, which includes current policies on elder abuse, services for senior citizens, and laws and regulations for managing personal finances, such as pension counseling. Older persons and their caregivers can seek guidance on rebuilding or remodeling existing housing

structures to improve accessibility, mobility and safety. Families who face the difficult process of placing their loved ones in assisted living or long-term care can be supported in determining when it is appropriate to consider alternative living arrangements and selecting suitable settings based on an individual's level of functioning, need for supervision and financial reserves. Culturally diverse populations can benefit from the translations of content into seven different languages.

American Association of Retired Persons ***www.aarp.org***⁶

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), a nonprofit organization for persons age 50 and older, is "dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all as we age." In general, this web site is not ideal for accessing health-related information; however, consumers can find details on important social and financial issues such as constructing living wills and advance directives, and assigning durable power of attorney for health care decision making. There is an existing capability of this website to empower individuals to be proactive in discussing sensitive issues at the end-of-life, enhancing communication between patients and their health care providers, and fostering better patient-provider relationships. A major drawback, however, relates to the promulgation of some subject matter that may not be scientifically based or in the preveue of what is defined by experts as acceptable. The use of message boards for on-line discussions with others creates a venue for sharing experiences, but there is always the potential for exchanging and exuding misinformation. Thus, consumers should be advised of these concerns, and encouraged to utilize existing links to reputable professional organizations and agencies that do present accurate and complete e-based health information.

Brown University Center ***for Gerontology and Health Research*** ***www.chcr.brown.edu***⁷

The nationally prominent research center at Brown University, the Center for Gerontology and Health Care Research, has established an exceptionally well-organized website designed

TABLE 1

Title of Website	Address of Website	The Presence "Yes" or Absence "No" of Content Areas Number of Positive Findings (0-4) for Each Category										Additional Features
		Scientific Information and Supporting Evidence		Pain/Palliative Care Perspectives		Professional Resources and Education		Patient and Caregiver Resources				
Administration on Aging	www.aoa.gov	RC	Yes	HL	No	CC	No	DRI	Yes	3	Translations in several languages, Alzheimer's Resource Room	
		EBG/PS	No	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	No	CXL	No	LGB	No			
American Association of Retired Persons	www.aarp.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	No	DRI	Yes	4	Translation in Spanish	
		EBG/PS	No	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	No	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	No	PM	No	CXL	No	LGB	Yes			
Brown University Center for Gerontology and Health Care Research	www.chcr.brown.edu	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	No	DRI	Yes	2	Toolkit of Instruments for End of Life Care, Atlas on Dying	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	No	CGS	No			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	No	LGB	Yes			
City of Hope/Beckman Research Institute, Pain/Palliative Care Resource Center	www.cityofhope.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	No	DRI	Yes	4	Ask the Expert Series, Patient and Public Education	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	Yes	LGB	Yes			
Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care at Beth Israel Medical Center	www.stoppain.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	No	DRI	Yes	3	Online CME Programs, Complementary Rx Link	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	No	S/CC	No	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	No	LGB	Yes			
End of Life/Palliative Education Resource Center	www.eperc.mcw.edu	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	No	1	Fast Facts PDA Download Index	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	No			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	Yes	LGB	Yes			
GeroNurse Online	www.geronurseonline.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	Yes	2	PDA resources available, Translation in Spanish	
		EBG/PS	No	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	No	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	Yes	LGB	No			
Growth House, Inc.	www.growthhouse.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	No	DRI	Yes	4	Links to Fast Facts	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	No	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	Yes	LGB	Yes			
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Associations	www.hpna.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	Yes	2	End of Life Geriatric Resources	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	No	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	Yes	LGB	No			
International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care	www.hospicecare.com	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	No	3	Hospice Help Guide	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	No	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	Yes	LGB	Yes			
John A Hartford Foundation Institute for Geriatric Nursing	www.hartfordign.org	RC	Yes	HL	No	CC	Yes	DRI	Yes	3	Geriatric Resource Team Kit, Special Topics in Long-term Care	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	No	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	No	CXL	Yes	LGB	No			
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization	www.nhpco.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	No	3	Translation in Spanish, Links Academic Resources	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	No	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	No	LGB	Yes			
Promoting Excellence in End of Life Care	www.promotingexcellence.org	RC	Yes	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	Yes	3	Key Clinical Assessment and Research Tools	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	Yes	CE	Yes	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	No	LGB	Yes			

Downloaded By: [University of Pennsylvania] At: 19:50 14 May 2009

Title of Website	Address of Website	The Presence "Yes" or Absence "No" of Content Areas Number of Positive Findings (0-4) for Each Category										Additional Features
		Scientific Information and Supporting Evidence		Pain/Palliative Care Perspectives		Professional Resources and Education		Patient and Caregiver Resources				
US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Indian Health Service (IHS)	www.ihs.gov/medica/programs/eldercare/	RC	No	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	No	1	Native American, Alaskan Resources	
		EBG/PS	Yes	AD/LW	No	CE	Yes	CGS	No			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	Yes			
		PRJP	No	PM	Yes	CXL	No	LGB	No			
Veteran Administration Nationwide Palliative Care Network	www.hospice.va.gov	RC	No	HL	Yes	CC	Yes	DRI	Yes	3	e-journal club, Palliative Response Teaching Guide	
		EBG/PS	No	AD/LW	No	CE	No	CGS	Yes			
		AT/RT	Yes	S/CC	Yes	RS&L	Yes	PFF	No			
		PRJP	Yes	PM	Yes	CXL	No	LGB	Yes			

RC: References/Citations	HL: Hospice Links	CC: Core Curriculum	DRI: Disease-Related Information
EBG: Evidence-Based Guidelines/ Position Statements	AD/LW: Advanced Directives/ Living Will	C: Continuing Education	CS: Caregiver/Group Support
AT/RT: Assessment/Research Tools	S/CC: Spirituality/Cultural Competency	RS&L: Remote Searches & Links	PFF: Provider/Facility Finder
PRJP: Peer-Reviewed Journal Publications	PM: Pain Management	CXL: Certification Exam Links	LGB: Loss/Grief/Bereavement Resources

specifically for health care professionals, researchers and policy-makers interested in palliative and end-of-life care. Highly regarded faculty in the field of gerontology and health service research have secured substantial external funding to support work in improving care to older adults, and to increase awareness and disseminate information about dying experiences in the United States. Among the many valuable resources are slide presentations on several topics such as hospice in nursing homes and improving mental health, and "best practices" as part of the Nursing Home/Hospice Collaboration Resources and Guidelines, which include comprehensive documents and links, and a geographic distribution, by state, for the use of feeding tubes in nursing home residents with cognitive deficits. Exciting opportunities are posted for postdoctoral fellowships to pursue scholarly work in health promotion and prevention, long-term care, community-based systems of care, health care organizations, and methodological approaches to health services research. It is also possible to access information on the state of practice related to advance directives, use of feeding tubes, hospice care and pain management.

The Toolkit of Instruments to Measure End of Life Care (T.I.M.E.) supports outcomes measurement and practice evaluation. Although still in the stages of development, a draft of this tool kit can be downloaded and applied to various practice settings for patient and family-

centered care. Lastly, families providing end-of-life care can benefit from a useful guide that explains advance directives, spiritual support, pain, hospice care and a list of resources for caregivers.

City of Hope Pain/Palliative Care Resource Center
www.cityofhope.org⁸

The City of Hope Pain/Palliative Care Resource Center (COHPPRC) was established in 1995 to disseminate information to the lay public and health care professionals for the purposes of improving the quality of pain management and end-of-life care. It is easy to navigate the website through the home page, which leads to content categories organized into patients and the public, disease and conditions, research, how to help, education, media, and information about the site and the City of Hope organization. A major strength of this site is the compendium of patient educational and other resource materials that can be downloaded for future use.

Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care at Beth Israel Medical Center
www.stoppain.org⁹

The Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care at Beth Israel Medical Center maintains a website to advance knowledge in pain

management and palliative care, not only for health care professionals, but also for patients and caregivers. This website has gained national recognition for the availability of teaching materials such as power point slide presentations on a range of topics, for example, fibromyalgia and chemical dependency and addiction assessments tips for the clinician, which can be downloaded easily. Continuing education credits are offered, primarily for physicians. Issues are raised surrounding the controversies of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, which is seldom addressed on other web sites. Last, a separate section is devoted to palliation of symptoms often experienced by the geriatric patient at the end-of-life. Caregivers can learn about basic measures to manage distressing symptoms such as changing position or turning on a fan to alleviate shortness of breath.

End of Life/Palliative Education Resource Center
www.eperc.mcw.edu¹⁰

The End of Life/Palliative Education Resource Center (EPERC) is dedicated to fostering the continued development of palliative care education to advance end-of-life care. Work is supported on ways to design, implement, and/or evaluate end-of-life and palliative care education for physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals. The website was created with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and it resides at the Medical College of Wisconsin. The American Association for Hospice and Palliative Medicine (AAHPM) is responsible for collecting and conducting peer-reviews for materials that are posted on this site. There are a considerable number of unique and innovative educational resources and instruments for evaluating learning. For example, the "Behaviorally Anchored Rating Forms" comprise a number of manuals, guides and syllabi for improving end-of-life care, providing education on medical ethics and palliative medicine, evaluating palliative care fellowships, and surveys to measure physician self-confidence and concerns about end-of-life clinical skills. It is possible to access CD ROMs, modules, multiple choice exams, pocket instructional aids, self-study guides, slide pre-

sentations, as well as standardized patient materials. There is no doubt that educators will be in awe of the incredible number of documents to support teaching efforts. Links do exist to other sites including the Palliative Care Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Inter-Institutional Collaborating Network on End of Life Care (IICN) Mega Search engine hosted by Growth House, Inc.

GeroNurse Online
www.geronurseonline.org¹¹

GeroNurse Online is a website for the practicing nurse, but it also contains useful content for consumers. The site promotes best practices by posting up to date, evidence-based information. Free assessment tools and rating scales can be downloaded into personal digital assistants (PDAs). Topics covered are symptom management, assessing pain in persons with dementia and caregiver strain. Nurses and health care administrators can seek details about initiatives such as the Nurses Improving Care for Health System Elders (NICHE), a national geriatric nursing program dedicated to improving care of patients age 65 and older.

Easy access to comprehensive clinical care guidelines is facilitated by drop down menus for a variety of "geriatric topics" addressing common patient care problems/conditions such as dementia, delirium, falls, hydration, mealtime difficulties, medications, pain, pressure ulcers and skin tears, physical restraint use, sleep, and urinary incontinence. Each is discussed in the context of definitions, background information, assessment and screening tools, and nursing interventions and treatments. "Need help stat" is an exception innovative in web-based programs that directs nurses to a comprehensive reference guide to facilitate development of action plans to confront challenges in clinical care, for example, confusion, pulling out tubes, restlessness, or refusing to eat or drink.

Growth House, Inc.
www.growthhouse.org¹²

Growth House, Inc. is a comprehensive website for both health care professionals and consumers with various resources to support

care for life-threatening illness and at the end-of-life. Growth House hosts the Inter-Institutional Collaborating Network On End Of Life Care (IICN) which is comprised of partnerships with over 40 educational organizations contributing educational materials related to end-of-life. All information can be easily accessed through a shared database, offering links to many regional, national, and international websites dedicated to end-of-life care. For health care professionals, the site contains palliative care assessment and research tools, educational programs on end-of-life, and "Fast Facts," which consist of one-page, peer-reviewed quick guides covering a variety of topics such as pain management in the nursing home and treating terminal delirium. These were originally published in a pocket-reference, but are now in a downloadable Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) format. The Growth House Blogging Portal, a weblog of routinely updated short publications, is used as a novel approach for quality improvement in end-of-life care through professional forum webboards and recommended guides.

The Bookstore catalogues best books, videos, and music on end-of-life subjects, including publications for the lay public on specific diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. Families dealing with terminal illness can find information on hospice and palliative care, bereavement support services, and guidance in planning funerals or managing estates.

Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association ***www.hpna.org***¹³

The website for the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA), a leading organization for nurses specializing in end-of-life and palliative care, is designed exclusively for registered nurses. Several documents specific to geriatric end-of-life care and education can be purchased at a reasonable price with a membership discount. These include the scope and standards of practice for the generalist hospice and palliative care nurse and a core curriculum for preparing nurses specializing in these areas. Recognizing the important contributions that other health care workers bring to hospice and palliative care, practice standards and core curricula are presented for licensed practical

nurses and nursing assistants. Patient/family "Tips" teaching sheets, which can be downloaded in PDF format, cover topics on dementia and pain issues for persons unable to communicate verbally. The HPNA site also posts numerous educational opportunities for nurses. Three separate teleconferences are conducted each month for advanced practice nurses, clinical nurses, and nursing assistants, which often include topics related to care of older adults. A registration fee is required and transcripts can be obtained for the sessions. Members have the option of joining a geriatric nurse special interest group (SIG).

Of great interest to nurses, the HPNA publishes "The Compendium of Treatment of End Stage Non-Cancer Diagnoses," which is a series of seven books on dementia, heart failure, hepatic, HIV/AIDS, neurological, pulmonary and renal diseases/conditions to assist in designing care for patients and their families. Each module examines the incidence of each disease process, pathophysiology, appropriate assessment techniques and treatments, and psycho-social implications. The potential ethical, economic, and research implications as they relate to specific disease processes are also addressed.

Indian Health Service-Elder Care Initiative ***www.ihs.gov.medicalprograms/eldercare***¹⁴

The mission of the Indian Health Service (IHS) website is to ensure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indians and Alaska Native people. With this goal in mind, the IHS has created the "Elder Care Initiative" to diffuse information relevant to the specific health care needs of the American Indian and Alaska Native populations requiring long-term and palliative care. The site directs users to several palliative care-related links for patients and families, as well as ones for health care professionals. The IHS has an initiative outlined in a Palliative Policy Paper, which describes a program now underway to develop culturally sensitive approaches in the care of elders in the Zuni community. Clearly, the paucity of culturally relevant resources and materials that address the unique health care issues of minorities is a

major concern, and the IHS leads in efforts to narrow the gaps in knowledge and to bring resources to Native Americans. The expansion of such groups holds promise for the future in improving our understanding of cultural values and how these are integral to delivering palliative and hospice care to ethnic diverse patients.

***International Association
for Hospice and Palliative Care***
www.hospicecare.com¹⁵

The International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHP) has created quite an extensive website to promote high quality hospice and palliative care for patients and their families and to inform consumers, health care professionals, and policy makers. A more comprehensive review of this site is published.¹⁶ The content includes general educational resources, journals and publications, IAHPC programs, travel and teaching materials, and an on-line video and book shop, which has recommended geriatric reading materials. Assessment tools for pain and palliative care do include several measures that are specific for older adults and caregivers. An external link to the Growth House search engine is established to enable access to additional information. The site is not systematically organized to allow easy retrieval of information that might be of interest to older persons, health care professionals, and policy makers. Tab headings on the home page do include quick links, main menu, publications, free newsletters, IAHPC events and programs, an international directory, and posted resources. Translations of content in foreign language versions are available, and links have been created to direct users to a number of other non-English websites.

***John A. Hartford Foundation Institute
for Geriatric Nursing***
www.hartfordign.org¹⁷

The John A. Hartford Foundation Institute for Geriatric Nursing is among the many outstanding web-based sources on palliative care for older adults. The organization is committed to advancing the “quality of health care older Americans receive by promoting the highest

level of geriatric competence in all nurses.” This mission is clearly illuminated on the website by the resources that help registered nurses initiate efforts to improve hospital competencies, develop nursing protocols, and obtain on-line access to gerontologic certification review courses. Information is tailored to various roles of nurses in practice, education, administration, and health policy. Nurses can keep current with national standards and testing requirements, hospital accreditation standards, and governmental policies concerning Medicare and Medicaid regulations. Practice protocols for care of older adults can be obtained through NICHE–Nurses Improving Care for Health System Elders—which can be purchased in a newly revised book by Mathy Mezey, Terry Fulmer, Ivo Abraham (Eds.); DeAnne Zwicker (Managing Ed.) (2003). *Geriatric Nursing Protocols for Best Practice*, 2nd Edition, New York: Springer Publishing Co.

***National Hospice and Palliative
Care Organization***
www.nhpco.org¹⁸

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) website provides an array of resources for health care professionals and consumers. As discussed in a previous website review, the NHPCO is a leading professional organization for advancing knowledge and research in end-of-life care.¹⁹ For patients and families, there is a link to the Caring Connections website (www.caringinfo.org) to help them with advance directives, financial planning, and pain management, and also to give advice on care giving and decisions about hospice care. By enabling a confidential and supportive outlet for locating information, a venue is established for approaching sensitive issues and answering difficult questions that patients and families may be uncomfortable in asking their health care providers. The NHPCO website does assist patients and families with finding a health care provider, hospice and home care services, and ways to seek grief counseling. A glossary with definitions of terms related to end-of-life care can be used to clarify terminology, which may be confusing to patients and families as well as health care professionals.

Promoting Excellence in End-of-Life Care
www.promotingexcellence.org²⁰

Promoting Excellence in End-of-Life Care is a national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which is dedicated to improving the quality of health care for all Americans, predicated on the goal of achieving better care for dying people and their families. The culmination of work garnered through demonstration projects and national workgroups serves as the primary sources of content posted on this web site. "Palliative Care Tools" are accessible encompassing aspects of clinical care, education, evaluation, and organizations. Clinicians in search of palliative care resources on spirituality and symptom management will find them here. Other materials include journal publications, books, book chapters, consensus reports, audio/visual presentations, and news media resources, which span topics on advance care planning, quality of life and death, bereavement, and dementia.

Promoting Excellence is a portal of entry or gateway to other internet sites with hypertext links to web sites, which enlist several geriatric resources for both health care professionals and patients and their families. A link to resources established by an on-going program, Palliative Excellence in Alzheimer's Care Efforts (PEACE Project) offers a selection of patient/family education sheets on issues such as grief and loss, pain, hospice, and weight loss at the end-of-life.

Veterans Administration (VA)
Nationwide Palliative Care Network
www.hospice.va.gov²¹

The Veterans Administration (VA) Nationwide Palliative Care Network (PCN) web site is designed to advance hospice and palliative care practice and education within the VA health care system. However, there is beneficial information that can be applicable to other health care settings outside the VA network. The site highlights model VA programs in palliative care and hospice services across the country, and draws attention to exemplary work in program development and achievements in quality outcomes. A unique feature of this website is the Palliative Care Journal Club Series Overview. Here, a number of journal articles, pub-

lished between 2002 and 2003 are summarized for the purposes of complementing palliative care training experiences. The write-ups emphasize how literature-based findings can be translated into improvements in clinical care. The e-Journal club and VA-specific forms and templates for supporting patient care can be accessed only through the VA intranet. The Geriatric, Palliative Care & Interprofessional Teamwork: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum contains 22 teaching modules on end-of-life care. These modules can be adapted for designing interdisciplinary educational programs to ensure competencies and effective collaboration in aspects of palliative care.

CONCLUSION

The rapid expansion of internet resources in response to the demands for information and resources related to palliative care and end-of-life care for geriatric populations requires continual surveillance, and warrants critical appraisals to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information available to patients and their families. More importantly, health care professionals need to routinely visit websites to evaluate the scholarly work that helps to advance practice, education, and research. Virtually all of the web sites address highly relevant and critical topics on geriatric care, and ones for health care professionals have exceptional criteria for designing educational programs and measuring outcomes. There is no question that the application of many of these resources has far reaching implications for expanding the armamentarium of practice guidelines to improve clinical care and establish standards for evaluating care and preparing health professionals for specialization in geriatric care.

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RECEIVED: 02/16/06
 REVISED: 02/17/06
 ACCEPTED: 02/28/06