

NET-CLIP

Challenges of e-medicine

By Dr Dur-e-Najaf

E-MEDICINE is being defined as all forms of electronic health care, delivered over the Internet, ranging from informational, educational and commercial "products" to direct services offered by pro-

cardiologist over a secure Internet link. The physician could call the patient in for an office visit as needed or, eventually, could reprogram the device remotely, without the patient having to leave home.

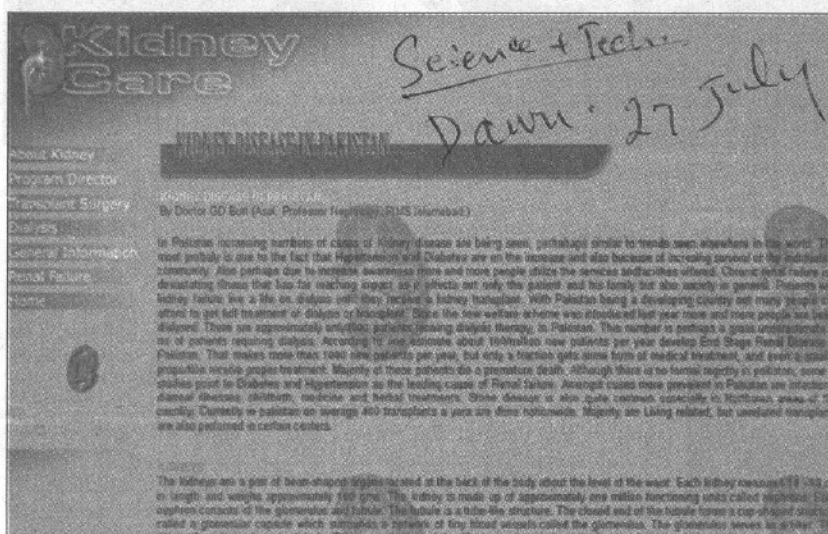
Some sites are specific to a

to help cancer patients, families, health care professionals and the general public can get accurate cancer-related information at no charge.

Sites such as www.ivilage.com and www.aol.com provide virtual communities, chat rooms for personal issues and discussion hours with professionals. Behavioural and lifestyle recommendations are available from a number of public websites such as www.realage.com.

An interesting site is www.selfhelpmagazine.com. SHM is frequented by participants from over 70 countries who gather to discuss over 60 topic areas, ranging from Munchausen Syndrome to depression. Launched in 1994,

SHM offers daily behavioural health-care news, articles, reviews, discussion boards, cartoons, post cards, a meditation centre and thousands of links to other healthcare websites. It consists of more than 3,000 pages developed by hundreds of volunteer psychologists, social workers, counsellors,



professionals, non-professionals, businesses or consumers themselves.

E-health includes a wide variety of the clinical activities that have traditionally characterized tele-health, but delivered through the Internet. E-health is also making health-care more efficient, while allowing patients and professionals to do the previously impossible.

Since the explosion of the Internet, two types of e-health companies have developed onto the web. One of them, bricks-and-mortar companies, are web-enabled. The other are companies that use the Web as their primary corporate environment.

Of the thousands of health-care sites that exist online; only a few hundred are exclusively web-based. Still their numbers are growing very rapidly and these are offering unprecedented services and benefits to their users.

An estimated 60 million adults used the Web to find health related information in 1998. In another survey of 3,269 Internet users, e-health

disease or a therapeutic area. www.diabetes.com is the site, which helps diabetic patients by giving information about the disease ranging from the diagnosis to prevention, types of diabetes, diet plans for diabetics and advice on weight control. The site gives all information about all kind of diabetics ranging from pregnancy to parenting and life style of the diabetics.

There are sites for cardiology such as www.heartlink.com, www.theheart.org and www.heartinfo.com. These are the educational websites that provides instructional information and services for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease. Backed by an internationally renowned panel of cardiologists, empowering and encouraging consumers and health care professionals in their effort to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

If one seeks help in dermatological problems then there are sites like www.skindex.com and www.dermatology.com. These sites give detailed information

designers and artists.

People seeking help in any surgical procedures, can get all the information about the diagnosis, complete detail of the surgical procedures and postoperative care. They can consult sites like www.surgisource.com.

Sites for children include www.aap.org.com, www.pedinet.com, www.parentspace.com. These have information on topics ranging from fertility, pregnancy, twins, breast-feedings, newborn, health, safety etc.

Providing educational resources for emergency and primary care physicians and health care providers are the sites such as www.trauma.org, www.erworld.com, www.embbs.com. Addressing kidney problems are websites like www.urolog.org, www.dug.com and a Pakistani website called www.kidneycare.com.pk. These are the sites for general information about kidneys diseases, surgery and dialysis related information about it.

The American Medical Association has joined with six other national physician asso-

benefits to their users.

An estimated 60 million adults used the Web to find health related information in 1998. In another survey of 3,269 Internet users, e-health users reported that finding disease specific information was their number one application of technology. Powered by the demand for prescription drugs, consumer spending for online health goods and services is estimated to increase from one million in 1999 to 0.8 billion in 2004.

There are sites to help patients in each and every kind of medical field ranging from sites for heart patients to skin diseases to psychiatric sites. And one of them is www.medtronic.com is developing a new monitoring service that will allow heart patients to use the Internet to relay up-to-date cardiac data from their homes to their physicians' offices. The electronic connection would use a home monitor to download information such as heart rate and battery status from an implanted pacemaker, defibrillator or experimental cardiac device, possibly while the patient sleeps.

The data would then be automatically transmitted to a

logical problems then there are sites like www.skindex.com and www.dermatology.com. These sites give detailed information on common skin diseases, including lupus, psoriasis, eczema and scleroderma. Literature on general skin care, including wrinkles, acne, natural treatments, beauty is also present.

Websites like www.healthy-women.org, www.woman.org, www.obgyn.net provide free, reliable health information for women everywhere giving information on topic areas like heart disease, disabilities and pregnancy, cancer, HIV and mental disorders etc.

Through websites like www.cancer.org, www.alpha-cancer.com, www.csi.nci.gov and www.oncolink.upenn.edu you can get comprehensive information about specific types of cancer, updates on cancer treatments and news about research advances. These sites update information everyday and provide information at various levels, from introductory to in-depth.

If you are interested in learning about cancer, you will benefit from visiting these websites which have a mission

eases, surgery and any related information about it.

The American Medical Association has joined with six other national physician associations to produce a comprehensive quality health information and communication website called Medical Empowerment www.medem.com.

In Pakistan we have sites like www.safety.net.pk, www.paksehat.com, www.pakmedinet.com which provide complete information on solutions to all health related concerns, ranging from information about diseases and conditions in English as well as in Urdu. Information about emergencies and the contact numbers of hospitals, doctors, health and welfare organizations, health news, medical journals, health equipments, medical education, pharma, nursing, conferences, CME and health ministry in Pakistan are also available.

The site also provides a medical library online, medical books, drug index and medical ethics details for medical student. The site also contains tips on beauty and fitness, parenting, health tips, first aid and physical exercise. ■