



OUT BEHIND THE BARN DANS LE FEU DE L'ACTION

Drug information resources

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Searches for drug-related information are one of the most common information-seeking tasks for physicians. This article reviews Internet sources of drug information and software products for handheld computers (a.k.a. personal digital assistants [PDAs]).

CMA DRUG INFORMATION

www.cma.ca

The Drug Information link on the CMA Web site provides access to a number of Lexi-Comp databases, including Lexi-Drugs and the related Pediatric, Geriatric and Natural Product databases, a drug interaction analyzer and drug identification tools. Canadian drug names, such as Clavulin and Reactine are recognized. As well as drug-related information, the site includes databases on infectious diseases, toxicology, laboratory tests and diagnostic procedures.

CMA PDA INFORMATION

The CMA's PDA Centre offers discounts on drug-related products for PDAs, from Skyscape, Lexi-Comp and PEPID. Click on the Types of Applications link, and then select Drug Guides or Drug Interaction Analyzers.

MDCONSULT

www.mdconsult.com

MDConsult includes Mosby's Drug Consult. It is available in the Osler section of the CMA Web site. It recognizes Canadian brand names.

COMPENDIUM OF PHARMA- CEUTICALS AND SPECIALTIES

www.pharmacists.ca

CPS is produced by the Canadian

Pharmacists Association and is available in paper, in CD-ROM form and, as of Mar. 31, 2004, online. A PDA version is planned for later in 2004.

HEALTH CANADA

DRUG PRODUCT DATABASE

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb/drugs-dpd/

This site provides brief information about medications available in Canada.

MEDIRESOURCE PRESCRIPTION DRUG INFORMATION

www.mediresource.com/pages/ndrug.htm

This Canadian site contains selected patient-oriented drug monographs that include lists of potential interactions.

MEDLINE PLUS

DRUG INFORMATION

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html

Drug monographs from the US Pharmacopeia (USP). It does not recognize Canadian brand names. Sponsor: US National Institutes of Health.

US DRUG RESOURCES

Canadian physicians should be aware that in the US, some drugs have different names, doses or indications. If you can't find a particular brand name, try searching for the generic name.

PDAS

Several drug databases are available for Palm OS or Pocket PC PDAs. The April 2002 issue of *Canadian Family Physician* and the November 2003 issue of *Canadian Journal of CME* contain reviews of these products.^{1,2} Most vendors offer a free trial version of their software.

LEXI-COMP

www.lexi.com

Lexi-Drugs is a comprehensive drug database but is more expensive than similar products. Drug information is cross-referenced with other Lexi-Comp products. It recognizes Canadian drug names, supports the use of memory cards and is available for both Palm OS and Pocket PC PDAs. Lexi-Interact and Lexi-Natural Products are separate drug interaction and alternative medicine products.

TARASCON PHARMACOPOEIA

www.tarascon.com

Tarascon includes information about alternative medications, a drug interaction analyzer and a medical calculator that recognizes SI units. It supports the use of memory cards and is available for Palm OS and Pocket PC PDAs. This is the current drug database used in the PocketProf program, which encourages PDA use by rural preceptors in Alberta. If you are not yet a PDA user, Tarascon publishes pocket-sized handbooks.

SKYSCAPE

www.skyscape.com

Skyscape sells several drug-related products, of which the most popular seems to be DrDrugs, which recognizes Canadian brand names, supports the use of memory cards and is available for both Palm OS and Pocket PC PDAs. It is cross-referenced with other Skyscape products, including the iFacts drug interaction analyzer.

PEPID

www.pepid.com

PEPID provides suites of medical software for emergency and primary care physicians. Part of each suite is the Portable Drug Companion, which is also available as a stand-alone product. It recognizes Canadian brand names, supports the use of memory cards and is available for Palm OS and Pocket PC PDAs.

EPOCRATES RX

www.epocrates.com

The free version of ePocrates is only available for Palm OS PDAs, and includes a drug-interaction analyzer. However, it does not recognize Canadian drug names, does not support the use of memory cards, and repeatedly nags you to update it regularly. It will shut down if not updated at least once a month. It

also reports your usage whenever you synchronize your PDA, so *read the user agreement very carefully.*

EPOCRATES RX PRO & EPOCRATES DX

The commercial version of ePocrates adds information on alternative medications and infectious diseases. It is available for both the Palm OS and Pocket PC PDAs. Even though you have paid for the product, it still reports your usage, the same as the free version. The ePocrates Dx product is a combination of the Rx Pro with the popular *Griffith's 5-Minute Clinical Consult.*

THE BOTTOM LINE

A review³ of PDA drug databases in *Medical Software Reviews* contains this sobering quote: "The content within these products is more fallible than any of us would like to acknowledge." This is a reminder that we should never completely trust the information from any single source when making clinical decisions.

RESOURCES

DALHOUSIE PDA DRUG REFERENCE

<http://handheld.medicine.dal.ca/software/drugs.htm>

This site reviews several PDA drug databases. It favours the DrDrugs and Lexi-Drugs products. The site also contains a review of Alternative Therapy References.

MEDICAL INFORMATION SERVICE (MIS)

WEB SITE

<http://ruralnet.ab.ca/medinfo/>

The Handheld Computer section of the University of Calgary's RuralNet Web site contains links to the Web sites and references mentioned in this article. It also provides information about other PDA drug databases.

REFERENCES

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2. Cameron S. PDAs: the whole world in your hands. *Can J CME* 2003;143. Available: www.stacommunications.com/journals/pdfs/cme/cmenov2003/pdas.pdf
3. Lazloff M. Drug information on the handheld in 2003: the next generation. *Med Software Rev* 2003;May-June:1-16.

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