

A GUIDE TO THE OHD'S WEB SITE

IN EARLY 1849, the emerging infection of greatest concern on the West Coast was gold fever, which reached epidemic proportions following an outbreak at Sutter's Mill, California. Thousands of 'forty-niners'* left their homes and families to travel west and seek their fortunes in the hills of California. Towns sprung up and flourished briefly, only to be abandoned almost over night. The lure of accessible gold, "free" for the taking, captured the imagination and fueled a collective dream—temporary hardship in return for a lifetime of riches. Forty-five years later, another outbreak occurred—this time focused in Alaska. It has taken over a century, but a similar epidemic is sweeping the planet now. The current outbreak is Internet fever.

THE GOLD FIELDS

By most measures, the Internet is a success. Tens and perhaps hundreds of millions of people went on line last year, seeking information, conversation, entertainment, services, and products—something to give additional meaning to their lives. The Internet is creating information and communication venues that are removing the traditional boundaries of time and location, not to mention peer review. For those of us in the information business, the Internet offers a plethora of new opportunities for broadcasting.

If measured in its equivalent weight in printed pages, it is fair to say that there are tons of medical and health related materials available online. Access to the full text articles of numerous scientific journals and news publications; preliminary data on clinical trials and health studies; analytic and diagnostic software; medical libraries; and Web-based study curricula are just a few of the things available today. The user-friendly World Wide Web (aka WWW, W3, Web) has

helped transform the Internet from a curiosity for the computer-savvy into a practical tool kindling fantastic visions of a global "village." The Web is a dynamic, interactive, and potentially limitless multimedia tool for teaching, learning and distributing information.

LIFE ON THE FRONTIER

During the Alaskan gold rush, a cry for better means of transportation and better roads was heard almost immediately. Many who use the Internet today echo this cry and believe WWW really means "worldwide wait." Are you tired of busy signals, overburdened sites, hardware and software hassles, dealing with large files, and links to pages long since returned to the O₃? Concerned about your personal privacy, copyright infringement, or the accessibility of objectionable materials online? Fed up with wading through hundreds of pages of junk to find what you were looking for? In truth, the promise of the Internet is often overshadowed by its day-to-day realities.

OHD STAKES ITS CLAIM

Does it make business sense to develop and maintain a Web site? The answer to that requires some thought, and to date most physicians have little trouble answering "nyet" for their own practices. For the Health Division, however, and many institutions, the answer is yes. In many respects our business is information, and as a public agency, unless we're involved in a large coverup, we're generally trying to give our product away to whomever wants it (and then some). It's easy to find our site; just remember this catchy handle: <http://www.ohd.hr.state.or.us>. Our site is a little over a year old and already over 1,600 files have been posted. Most files are simple text or graphics, but a growing number of files (over 350 at last count) with more sophisticated formatting are posted as *Portable Document*

Format (PDF, aka Acrobat) documents. PDF is a proprietary "universal" file format that allows formatted text and graphics to be read by (and printed) by those who may not have the applications, fonts, or even operating system used to create them.†

The Health Division has ambitious plans to build on its successful, although modest, start. Although we had over 100,000 hits§ during our first year, we know we still have a long way to go to make our site easier to use and more informative. New and updated content is routinely added and we encourage you to visit our site frequently. Questions, comments, or suggestions for material to post or how to make finding information currently online easier, can be directed to the Health Division's Webmaster (rocke.p.klockner@state.or.us).

IS THERE GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS?

As we have warned in the past, all that glitters is not gold on the Internet. Readers must keep in mind that anyone can post information on the Internet. Separating useful facts from irrelevant or specious information is not always easy. As with any source of information, you need to have a critical eye and assess the credibility of your sources. The table (*verso*) lists some of the information currently on the Health Division web site, broken down into three general categories. Most of it is deemed reliable, but perhaps that is for the reader to judge. We invite your scrutiny.

† To read Acrobat (pdf) files, a shareware program called the Acrobat Reader (Adobe; Mt. View, California) must be installed on your computer. Different versions of the Reader (Mac, UNIX, Windows) can be downloaded for "free" from Adobe's Web site (<http://www.adobe.com>). As its name implies, the Reader module only allows you to read/image Acrobat files. To create them yourself for dissemination to other parties, you need to buy other Acrobat software from Adobe.

§ Hits, to the naïve reader, are a somewhat bogus measure of site activity. In theory, everytime someone accesses a page, a hit is registered.

* so named for the modal IQ of the fortune hunters.

CD Summary (ISSN 1058-7888) is published biweekly, free of charge, by the Oregon Health Division, a part of the Dept. of Human Resources, 800 NE Oregon St., Portland, Oregon 97232
 Periodicals postage paid at Portland, Oregon.
Postmaster—send address changes to:
 CD Summary, 800 NE Oregon St., Suite 730, Portland, OR 97232.

CD SUMMARY

April 14, 1998
 Vol. 47, No. 8

PERIODICALS
 POSTAGE
PAID
 Portland, Oregon

OHD Web Site: Selected Highlights

Topic	Location (unless specified, all begin: http://www.ohd.hr.state.or.us)
For Health Care Providers	
CD Summary Newsletter Issues (from mid-1996 on)	/cdpe/docs/cdsummyr.htm
Death with Dignity Act information and forms	/cdpe/chs/pas/pas.htm
facts about the Oregon State cancer registry (OSCaR)	/cdpe/hpcdp/docs/oscar.htm
FAQs* about confidential named HIV reporting	/cdpe/hiv/docs/faqs.htm
Health licensing office	http://www.hdlp.hr.state.or.us
Immunization Alert information	/ccfh/imm/alert/oregonho.htm
reportable diseases (text list and color poster)	/cdpe/mdrpt.htm
laboratory licensing information	/phl/ll/welcome.htm
vaccine information statements (VIS)	http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vistable.htm
waived and Physician Performed Microscopy (PPM) tests	/phl/ll/waivppm.htm
For Health Educators, Researchers and Students	
communicable disease surveillance reports (monthly)	/cdpe/acd/docs/msurvprt.htm
health status & mortality of racial and ethnic groups in Oregon	/cdpe/chs/hsrace/hsrace.htm
health status indicators	/cdpe/chs/hsi/or_hsi.htm
HIV/AIDS annual report	/cdpe/hiv/rpt96/index.htm
weekly reportable disease tally; influenza information	/cdpe/acd/welcome.htm
Oregon AIDS Surveillance Report (weekly)	/cdpe/hiv/docs/aidsum.htm
Oregon Health Trends Newsletter issues	/cdpe/chs/newsltr/oh48/trends48.htm
Oregon Vital Statistics Annual Report 1995, Volume 1	/cdpe/chs/arpt/95v1/toc_95.htm
preliminary vital statistics data (births, abortions, deaths)	/cdpe/chs/preabd/aborbide.htm
Primary Care Capacity in Oregon (report)	coming soon
Sexually Transmitted Diseases - information and data	/cdpe/std/welcome.htm
suicide and suicidal thoughts by Oregonians (report)	/cdpe/chs/suicide/pr_sui.htm
teen pregnancy data	/cdpe/chs/docs/chs0013.htm /cdpe/chs/docs/chs0014.htm /cdpe/chs/teen/tphome.htm
vital statistics data by county	/cdpe/chs/cdb96p/codat96p.htm /cdpe/chs/cntydata/codata95.htm
Youth Behavior Risk Survey data	/cdpe/chs/yrbms97/yrbms97.htm
Of General Interest	
fish advisories	/cehs/esc/fishadv.htm
Health Division press releases	/news/press.htm
Information about and order forms for birth, death, marriage and divorce records	/cdpe/chs/certif/certifaqs.htm
lead-based paint hazards and information	/cehs/esc/lead/welcome.htm
Oregon baby names†	/cdpe/chs/babynome/babynome.htm
Oregon drinking water information, bulletins, forms, etc.	/cehs/dwp/welcome.htm
WIC income eligibility criteria	/ccfh/wic/wic-inc1.htm
brochure: <i>A Day in Your Life with Public Health</i>	coming soon (can you feel the excitement?)

New AIDS Czar Named

MARK LOVELESS, MD, has joined the Health Division as the new manager of the recently merged HIV/AIDS, STD, and TB program. Dr. Loveless is a graduate of Northwestern University Medical School and completed his Internal Medicine residency and Infectious Diseases Fellowship in Portland. In addition to working as an infectious disease clinician at OHSU, Dr. Loveless has been involved for 15 years with community-based HIV/AIDS organizations in Oregon, including the Oregon AIDS Task Force, the Research and Education Group, the HIV Care Consortium, and the HIV Services Planning Council.

* frequently asked questions (FAQs) pages present information in a question-answer format

† our most popular pages