

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Easing Cancer Pain. Karen Ogle, MD. The American Cancer Society, (800) 227-2345.

PRICE: \$10.

DOCUMENTATION: None included; information available on the Web at www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/cancer-pain.

HOW SUPPLIED: CD-ROM.

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS: PC with a 486 66 Mhz processor, 16 MB RAM, 256 colors at 640x480 pixels, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1, 95, or NT 3.5.1, and QuickTime 2.1; or Power Macintosh or a 68030 33 Mhz processor, 16 MB RAM, 256 colors at 640x480 pixels, double-speed CD-ROM drive, System 7.1, and QuickTime 2.1.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT: Toll-free (800) 500-1554.

RATING: Highly recommended.

Easing Cancer Pain is a multimedia program primarily for patients with cancer pain and their families. However, it can also act as an educational primer for health care workers and for patients with other types of chronic pain.

The purpose of the program is to inform patients and clinicians about multiple facets of pain control for the cancer patient. Topics include how to approach a clinician with concerns, how to use rating scales, and different types of pain (eg, neurogenic, chronic, bone, and

breakthrough). The program also provides information about pain management techniques, medication addiction, treatment side effects, and many other aspects of pain management and end-of-life care.

The strengths of this program are its simplicity and content. It uses a summer camp as its backdrop, which immediately lets the user know that this is not going to be another dry lecture. *Easing Cancer Pain* is a highly interactive program that is navigated by clicking on various objects. The initial map contains selections for the assessment and treatment of pain and barriers to treatment, and users can click on their choice (Figure 1). Each section is divided into manageable amounts of information (Figure 2). In each section, users can access patient stories that are divided into discussions about pain assessment, barriers to pain treatment, treatment modalities that eventually worked, and outcome. These discussions address each problem in a poignant, sympathetic, and realistic way.

From a technical perspective, navigation is flawless, and the program can easily be experienced in a nonlinear fashion, accessing only the information the user needs. This also allows the user to experience different portions of the program at multiple sittings. Much of the information is provided in written as well as audio form, and a narrator leads the user through the program by making suggestions about how to proceed from each screen. This is CD-ROM-based multimedia instruction at its best.

For clinicians, *Easing Cancer Pain* provides a win-

FIGURE 1

The image map of *Easing Cancer Pain* with its summer camp theme.

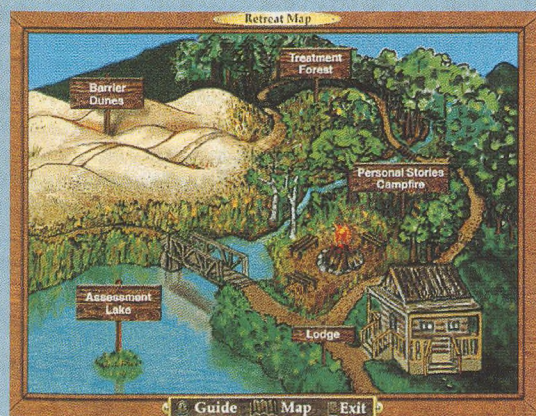


FIGURE 2

There are a manageable amount of choices in each section.



dow on patients that can help sensitize them to some of the issues confronting patients with cancer pain.

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ONLINE JOURNALS

PRICE: Free; some journals have additional information available for subscribers.

HOW SUPPLIED: On the World Wide Web.

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS: Any computer with Web access and browser software.

RATING: Good to excellent.

In this age of the ever-expanding World Wide Web, many journals are making at least part of their content available online. Although electronic versions of publications may not immediately replace printed copies, viewing them can be a simple, inexpensive way for physicians to monitor publications to which they do not subscribe or to read an article that is capturing the headlines.

There are several advantages to reading journals online. First, it eliminates those huge stacks of journals at home and in the office and, in cases where the full text of a journal is available, it eliminates the need to keep old copies. Second, online journal are easy to use. Users can quickly scan the contents and immediately view the material of interest, probably faster than they could wade through a printed copy. Third, they are available anywhere you have a computer with an Internet link. Finally, there is no cost beyond that of Internet access. Many journals cost more than \$100 per year, and few of us can afford to spend large amounts of money for journals when we only read 1 or 2 articles per issue.

Online journals are usually updated frequently, often having the content posted before the date on the printed copies. Most have at least 1 or 2 years of back issues online. Some have made special efforts to make their back issues available: *Pediatrics* has posted its full content all the way back to 1975. Almost all of the journals' Web sites have features for searching back issues by key word or date.

Articles found online can be printed or downloaded. (Tables and figures often must be downloaded or printed separately.) If the full text of an article is not available online, the citations can be copied and the article obtained in hard copy. If finding the original article is difficult, it is possible to order it from services on the Web, although some of these charge \$9 to \$20 per article. Examples of such services include Lonesome Doc at the National Library of Medicine (tendon.nlm.nih.gov/ld/loansome.html) and Physicians Online (www.po.com), which offers some services free. Additionally, some subscription on-line services have article-order features.

Many primary care journals have sites on the Web

TABLE

Selected List of Online Journals and Their Contents

| Journal Title | URL |
|---|--|
| <i>Academic Medicine</i> | www.aamc.org/findinfo/aamcpubs/acadmed/start.htm |
| <i>American Family Physician</i> | www.AAFP.org/afp/ |
| <i>Annals of Internal Medicine</i> | www.acponline.org/journals/annals/annaltoc.htm |
| Archives series of specialty journals | www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/archives.htm |
| <i>British Medical Journal</i> | www.bmj.com |
| <i>Family Medicine</i> | www.stfm.org/fmhub/fmhub.html |
| <i>Family Practice Management</i> | www.aafp.org/fpm/ |
| <i>Journal of the American Board of Family Physicians</i> | www.medscape.com/ABFP/JABFP/public/journal.JABFP.html |
| <i>Journal of Family Practice</i> | www.jfampract.com |
| <i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i> | www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/jama/jamahome.htm |
| <i>Morbidity and Mortality Weekly</i> | www.cdc.gov/epo/mmwr/mmwr.html |
| <i>New England Journal of Medicine</i> | www.nejm.org/content/index.asp |
| <i>Pediatrics</i> | www.pediatrics.org |

URL denotes uniform resource locator (the Web address).

(Table). Extensive lists of online journals can be found on a number of sites, including the National Library of Medicine (nihlibrary.nih.gov), and through search engines such as Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com/Health/Medicine/Journals). There are no prominent online-only journals in primary care or general medicine, with the exception the *Pediatrics* site pages that contain full-text articles that appear only as abstracts in the print version. Publishers Priory Lodge Education (www.priory.co.uk) and CCPublishing (www.ccsublishing.com) have a series of online primary care journals, but they offer little original content and appear to be infrequently updated.

For readers who use abstracting services, these also exist online: Medscape's Journal Scan is free (www.medscape.com/Medscape/features/JournalScan/public/index-JournalScan.html), and the Massachusetts Medical Society's Journal Watch series (www.jwatch.org) is by paid subscription.

I regularly check the sites of my favorite journals, downloading and saving the articles I think I will refer back to. This has dramatically slowed the accumulation in my paper-based filing system. I have also lowered my number of paid subscriptions.

Now all you have to do is get your kids to turn off that computer game so you can do your reading.

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