



e-health part of an ongoing series

Entering the world of medical blogs

IN ANNOUNCING THAT ITS 2006 person of the year was “you,” *TIME* magazine wrote that 2006 was “a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before.” Making that story happen, *TIME* noted, are the individuals who are linking, posting, and creating on the Internet through personal websites and networking tools like blogs.

Blogs related to health care are written by doctors, patients, hospital administrators, consultants, researchers, insurance companies, and even trial lawyers. Some physicians write blogs about their practice (“Ob/Gyn Kenobi”), while others are more political (“DB’s Medical Rants”). Could a blog be in your future?

Patient education the goal of the Infertility Blog

For a year now, New York City infertility specialist and ACOG Fellow Frederick L. Licciardi, MD, has been using a blog to help patients understand their infertility and various approaches to treatment.

Offering scientific information, along with

blog *\blɒg\ n*: short for “web log,” a type of website with journalistic entries displayed in reverse chronological order. Often written by one person, but some have several regular contributors. Except for the dated entries, the look is similar to other websites, with graphics, links to other blogs and websites, and downloadable files.

his personal experience and perspectives, Dr. Licciardi’s blog gets about 6,000 hits a month with entries such as “Is LH Important for IVF Success?” and “Uterine Scar Tissue after a D and C.”

“I’m trying to give patients the ability to see through the sensationalism.”

Noting that reproductive medicine lends itself to the “selling” of new techniques, Dr. Licciardi said, “I’m trying to give patients the ability to see through the sensationalism. There are no quick fixes; there’s no magic bul-

let. People want to know ‘Is that something that is really going to help me?’ Once they get the basic understanding they’ll be able to have more control over their fertility care.”

Dr. Licciardi considers a blog a great way for physicians to communicate their message.

“The doctor can’t be afraid to let the patients know who she or he really is. It helps with the doctor-patient relationship.”

Blogs allow straight talk and create a community

A very different kind of blog, “The Blog that Ate Manhattan” is also written by an ACOG Fellow living in New York City. In addition to medicine-related topics, the blog covers ven-

MEDICAL BLOGS



The Blog That Ate Manhattan:
www.theblogthatatemanhattan.blogspot.com



Infertility Blog:
www.infertilityblog.blogspot.com



Ob/Gyn Kenobi:
www.obgynkenobi.blogspot.com

tures in the kitchen. Maintaining anonymity, the blogger—known as Dr. TBAM, the acronym for the blog's name—makes this simple statement on the site, "I practice medicine, cook, and wax prolific in New York City."

Dr. TBAM told *ACOG Today* that she selects topics using the "whatever grabs me" approach, coupled with how much time she has. A December entry aimed to help readers understand the results of a randomized control trial on discontinuing Fosamax use after five years. Another entry addressed the efficacy of mammograms for women younger than 50 and the differences in screening guidelines between the US and Britain.

Dr. TBAM said her goal in the blog is "to balance out the negative in medicine and give it a positive spin."

"It's a way to get our voice out without going through a reporter. It's a place for us where there's no media in between," she said.

Being part of a blogging community, whether as the blogger or a reader, is one of the best things about blogging, according to Dr. TBAM.

"I feel like I have friends out there that I've never met. I know a lot of the people who read my blog—because they comment," she said.

"And I read their blogs and comment on them. That part's really been fun."

MedGadget blog has nearly 3,000 hits a day

The robust blog medGadget has several posts every day, with topics ranging from a vaginal "molecular condom" to implantable optical glucose sensors designed for patients with diabetes and high-definition video equipment used for medical procedures.

"MedGadget is not trying to offer patient education—it's the 'wow' factor of medicine," said Brian Levine, MS, medical student representative to ACOG's District II Junior Fellows. Mr. Levine is one of medGadget's eight contributors, whose entries go through an editorial team before posting.

An avid fan of blogs, Mr. Levine believes they have a beneficial effect on medicine.

"You have patients come in who are more educated than you can imagine. The best thing about blogs is that they spur conversation. Patients educate physicians on what they want to know."™

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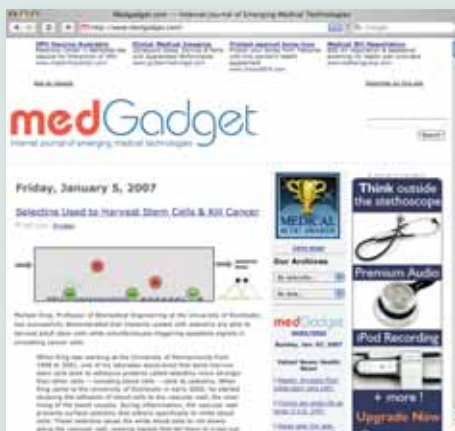
→ Introduction to blogging: http://codex.wordpress.org/introduction_to_blogging

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Getting to know blogs

- ⓐ A number of free blog services allow anyone to set up a blog in a matter of minutes. The blogger may be anonymous, but even anonymous bloggers usually include a little information about themselves, such as "I'm an emergency physician in Texas"
- ⓑ Blogs with lots of readers often attract advertisers, and some blogs are created by a commercial enterprise, which may or may not be apparent
- ⓒ Most blogs offer readers a link to submit comments, which are then posted on the blog site, giving readers a way to communicate with the blogger as well as each other. The blogger has the option of screening comments and omitting spam or offensive posts
- ⓓ "Blogsphere" is a term that has been coined to refer to the interconnectivity of blogs, including not only comments posted, but also the links between blogs
- ⓔ Some blogs allow readers to subscribe to receive an alert of new entries through email



Links to more than 100 sites nominated for annual "best medical blog" awards: www.medgadget.com

DB's Medical Rants: www.medrants.com



Grand Rounds, a weekly blog that accumulates the best medical posts from previous week: www.blogborygmi.blogspot.com