

Information resources for child health

John Eyers with another valuable selection of resources



Child health in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) has perhaps, for obvious reasons, received more attention from funding agencies, international organisations, NGOs, and researchers than other areas of health. There is, as a result, more information available on child health that has been written for doctors and healthcare workers in resource-poor settings, but much of this information is not readily available; NGOs, international organisations, ministries of health, and universities have done sterling work producing appropriate and locally relevant textbooks, guidelines, lectures and videos, but as always with this material, it is rarely collected together so that anyone seeking this material has to spend time – often at personal expense – searching the Internet where this information invariably resides.

Since there is so much material scattered throughout hundreds of websites, I will only attempt to select a tiny range of different types of resources which illustrate what there is. Anyone attempting to search the Internet for paediatric and child health information should ruthlessly focus on the area of the subject that is required.

Essential Health Links – paediatrics

(<http://www.healthnet.org/essential-links/pediatrics>)
A good place to start any search is a reliable and up-to-date 'gateway' site such as *Essential Health Links* which is a collection of links to medical and health links, arranged by specialty and general topics that are appropriate for LMICs.

CHILD2015: Child Healthcare Information and Learning Discussion Group

(<http://www.hifa2015.org/child2015-forum>)
All health professionals benefit from contact and interaction with their colleagues, and email discussion lists are a good way to learn from others in whatever part of the world they may live. Such lists are particularly useful for those isolated in remote areas, and who have email access. This list focuses on child health information needs in LMICs. More general health discussion lists include Afro-Nets (<http://www.afronets.org>) and HIFA2015 (<http://www.hifa2015.org>) which contain discussions on child health.

As a member of HIFA2015 (<http://www.hifa2015.org/>), John Eyers believes one of the biggest challenges for improved health in less-developed countries is ensuring that equal access to appropriate and evidence-based health information is made available to all.

Public Library of Science Collections – Sub-Saharan Africa's Mothers, Newborns, and Children

(<http://www.ploscollections.org/article/browse/issue.action?issue=info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fissue.pcol.v07.i09>)

PLoS has established itself as a high-quality, high-impact, open-access journal publisher and has collected a series of papers together on maternal and child health which address current and future directions for Africa. A useful series of thought-provoking papers.

Clinical and research literature

Most practitioners will turn to the journal literature for the latest information, so databases such as PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>) will provide up-to-date reviews and guidelines. A useful feature of PubMed is its Clinical Queries facility (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/clinical>) which allows subject or disease searching limited to clinical study categories (therapy, etiology, diagnosis, etc), systematic reviews and medical genetics. To back up databases, Hinari (http://extranet.who.int/hinari/en/browse_journal_subject.php?subj=pediatrics) provides a huge range of paediatrics and child health journals in full text and some paediatrics clinical handbooks (such as *BNF for Children* and *Red Book Online* (American Academy of Pediatrics)). Syntheses of evidence will be found in The Cochrane Library (<http://www2.cochrane.org/reviews/en/topics/index.html>), which has a drop-down menu allowing users to identify reviews collected by topic. Specific paediatric topics include Child Health, Childhood Cancer, Acute Respiratory Infections, Neonatal; but child health is also covered in most of the other headings. The Trip Database (<http://www.tripdatabase.com>) has started to list clinical practice evidence identified (by its users) as being of use to LMICs.

TALC (Teaching Aids at Low Cost)

(<http://www.talcuk.org>)
If the Internet is unavailable, TALC, founded by the late Professor David Morley, provides low-cost books and other educational materials to promote the health of children. It also distributes free CDs (ten have so far been issued) of full-text information from journals such as the *BMJ* and *Lancet* as well as textbooks and other publications.

Let me know any useful web sites and other sources of information you use, so that I can pass on the information to other readers – johneyers@hotmail.com.