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Health-Related Blogs

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Health-Related Blogs

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Health-Related Blogs

Posted on **February 1, 2004** by **Editor**



By **Kevin Kawamoto, Ph.D.**

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[.01 The Weblog, or Blog](#) ([return to index](#))

By now most people on the Net have heard of weblogs – or blogs – and may even use them as a news and information source. For those who aren't familiar with them, here's quick run down. Blogs are like online journals on the Web that bloggers – the people who operate the blog site – use to post their opinions, observations, and other content on the Web such as news articles. Using blogging software, the bloggers can post new content instantly and relatively easily when compared to publishing a conventional Web site. Thousands of blogs exist on the Web on a wide variety of topics – some serious, some frivolous, and others in between.

Blogs run the gamut in terms of quality and content. Some are little more than personal musings and commentaries on the mundane. They may have appeal to friends and family of the blogger and perhaps a curious group of strangers who enjoy the voyeuristic aspects of keeping tabs on someone they don't know. Other blogs are good places for people to vent their opinions or publicly complain about some aspect of life ("rants") that annoys them at the moment. Check Google with the keywords "blogs" and "directory" for sites that catalog blog topics.

Other blogs, however, are more serious and can be quite informative. News organizations are increasingly using blogs to document the more personal aspects of journalism – something akin to publishing the journalist's personal thoughts and observations while writing the news story. It reads differently from "hard news," which is more detached, and often nicely complements the

more traditional news reporting by offering personal glimpses that the journalist experiences in writing a story.

Blogs can be used in many different ways, including education. Students can use blogs to share news and information with each other as well as share their opinions on those topics or on each other's comments. It could be a way for different students or groups of students to search for particular aspects of a research topic and bring their respective findings into a common forum – the blog. Blogs have tremendous potential as a creative and innovative learning tool.

.02 **Health-Related Blogs** ([return to index](#))

Web sites have become a common way to share health-related news and information. Some of these Web sites are more news-oriented, and others are more personal. Blogs are being used to share health-related information as well. Bloggers interested in a particular health topic have created blogs that serve as information sources for the latest news and information about those topics. Web users interested in that topic can check back regularly with the blog to see what the latest news is, or what people are saying about it.

One example of a health-related blog is Scoliosis News [1], a blog for “posting news reports related to scoliosis.” It is a compilation of news about this medical condition, which involves abnormal curves in the spine. For people with this or any other health-related problems, a blog of this nature can help keep them up to date with some of the latest news about the topic – treatments, research, controversies, and so forth. Accessing a blog on a specific topic is likely to be more convenient than doing a search through the general news, and if the blogger allows it, people visiting the blog site can also comment on various topics of interest.

Medical Rants [2] is a blog of a more general nature. In the “About” section of the blog, the blogger Dr. Robert Centor discusses why he decided to start Medical Rants in 2002. “Earlier this year,” he writes, “I discovered blogging. I do not remember the first blog that I read. I do remember that the concept intrigued me immediately.” Then he read a blog called MedPundit and found a “role model.” He began blogging about health-related topics and enjoyed “staying up to date on medical issues.” [3]

Medical Rants also provides a list of links to other health-related blogs, including Grunt Doc, MedPundit, and Living With Diabetes. Those interested in health-related blogs should find the variety of blogs on the list interesting and informative.

Some health blogs on the Web are operated by medical professionals; others are not. Some are operated by people who have a certain medical problem or are just interested in health topics in general. At least one blog on the Web details the working life of medical interns, from the interns' perspective [4]. Another is about health and nutrition by a computer programmer and single father [5] who acknowledges that he is “not an expert” but just “someone who is interested in these topics and reads widely and would like to exchange information with others (like you!).”

.03 **Caveats** ([return to index](#))

As with everything else on the Web, blogs need to be critically evaluated by the blog consumer. However, just because a blog is not operated by a medical professional doesn't mean the information on there is necessarily suspect. And likewise just because a blog is operated by a medical professional doesn't mean the information constitutes sound medical advice. The old disclaimer applies to all health information on the Web: The content online is not a substitute for professional medical advice from your primary care physician. If you think you have a medical problem, see your doctor for treatment. Health-related blogs offer information that may be helpful in keeping up with medical developments, getting people's non-professional opinions, or forming a kind of online community, but they have to be regarded with caution because, unlike most scholarly journals and other professional publications, they do not go through a stringent review process before publication. Blog readers should try to determine who is putting out the information, what their motivations are, and how reliable the sources cited appear to be.

.04 **Conclusion** ([return to index](#))

Blogs are an interesting phenomenon on the Web and seem to be growing in popularity. They are another way some people choose to share health-related news and information. They're relatively easy to set up if you have Web connectivity and can be a great way to instantly post information to the Web for a small, medium, or large blog community interested in what you have to say. They do, however, require a time commitment. Like Web sites, which can fall out of date because Webmasters realize, after a while, how time-consuming it is to maintain an up-to-date site, information on blogs can also become dated. People expect current postings on blogs. If they don't find it, the blog appears to be abandoned. Blogging is not a wealth-producing activity (at least not yet), so most bloggers do it as a labor of love. They get something out of it personally, as well as provide a service to others in many cases. Whether they can or choose to remain committed to the blog will probably depend on how long their internal and external motivations for blogging can sustain them.

Those interested in blogging should check out what's out there using some of the tips found in this article and also visit some of the more popular blogging tool sites such as Blogger (www.blogger.com), Livejournal (www.livejournal.com), and Typepad (www.movabletype.org). In addition, researchers have started to write about the blogging phenomenon, and some of their ruminations can be found on the Web.

.05 **References** ([return to index](#))

[1] Scoliosis News' blog can be accessed at <http://scoliosisnews.blogspot.com/>.

[2] Medical Rants can be accessed at <http://www.medrants.com>.

[3] See "About my blog," at <http://www.medrants.com/archives/000271.html>.

[4] See "Interns' Diary," <http://blogs.salon.com/0003027/>.

[5] See "Nutrition & the Immune System," <http://healthylife.typepad.com/>

See past columns for more information about health informatics:

"Health Information Online Abundant and Varied"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2002/11/kawamoto.php>

"Teaching Students About Cyberhealth Information"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2003/01/kawamoto.php>

"Older Adults and the Internet"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2003/02/kawamoto.php>

"Computer Technology in Health Care Settings"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2003/04/kawamoto.php>

"Privacy and Personal Health Information"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2003/06/kawamoto.php>

"Healthy Learning Can Be Fun: Digital Media and Health Education"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2003/07/kawamoto.php>

"Compassion Knows No Border: The Research of Patricia Radin"

<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2003/09/kawamoto.php>

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5 THOUGHTS ON "HEALTH-RELATED BLOGS"

sensacja

on **January 30, 2014 at 7:11 AM** said:

Hmm it seems like your web site ate my first comment (it was really long) so I guess I am going to just sum it up what I had written and say, I'm thoroughly enjoying your blog. I as well am an aspiring blog writer but I'm nonetheless new to everything. Do you have any recommendations for novice blog writers? I'd surely appreciate it. |Woah! I'm incredibly loving the template/theme of this blog. It's simple, yet effective. A lot of times it is difficult to have that "perfect balance" in between user friendliness and visual appearance. I need to say you have done a superb task with this. Also, the blog loads incredibly fast for

me on Safari. Outstanding Blog!|Do you mind if I quote a couple of your posts as lengthy as I provide credit ratings and sources back for your site? My blog internet site is within the same area of interest as yours and my site visitors would truly benefit from lots of the details you produce here. Please enable me know if this alright with you. Thank you!|Hi would you mind letting me know which webhost you might be using? I've loaded your blog in 3 various web browsers and I have to say this blog loads significantly faster than most. Can you recommend a excellent world-wide-web hosting provider at a truthful price? Thanks, I appreciate it!|Fantastic internet site you've the following but I was wanting to know in case you knew of any discussion boards that cover the exact same topics talked about here? I'd extremely adore to become a component of community wherever I can get guidance from other experienced men and women that share the same interest. If you have any suggestions, please allow me know. Several thanks!|Hey! This can be my first comment right here so I just wanted to give a quick shout out and say I truly appreciate reading your blog posts. Can you recommend any other blogs/websites/forums that go more than the exact same topics? Appreciate it!|Do you've a spam problem on this website; I also am a blogger, and I was curious about your situation; we have created some nice practices and we are looking to exchange ways with other folks, please shoot me an email if interested.

nigeria

on **January 30, 2014 at 11:35 AM** said:

Hey really cool internet site!! Guy .. Beautiful .. Superb .. I am going to bookmark your blog and take in the feeds also...I am satisfied to discover so numerous exciting information right here in the post, we'd like develop additional methods in this regard, thanks for sharing.

headlines

on **January 30, 2014 at 1:56 PM** said:

I and also my buddies came searching at the very good tips located on a website and previous to lengthy I had a terrible feeling I never thanked the internet site owner for those tips. All the men and women are genuinely warmed to find out them and have now actually been creating the most of these things. Numerous thanks for genuinely being very kind as well as for figuring out particular incredibly very good themes most people are extremely needing to be aware of. My sincere apologies for not expressing appreciation to earlier.

Russel Niblock

on **January 30, 2014 at 6:15 PM** said:

great issues altogether, you just won a emblem new reader. What might you recommend about your post that you made a few days ago? Any sure?

9ja

on **February 3, 2014 at 1:33 AM** said:

I will right away clutch your rss as I can't in finding your email subscription link or newsletter service.