



CyberSearch

QUICK CLICKS TO ANSWER CLINICAL QUESTIONS

Cathy Risdon, MD, CCFP

I am sure this has happened to you. You read a great evidence-based review on a topic that you know is relevant to your practice. You do not happen to have any patients at that very moment who need that investigation or drug, but you know you will. You put the review in a place you know you will remember next time the appropriate patient appears.

For me, last week, it was spironolactone. When the Randomized Aldosterone Evaluation Study (RALES) was published, I remember thinking “Hmmm. That’s interesting. I have some patients who fit that criterion.” Several months later, a local cardiologist presented family practice rounds on the same topic. I have to remember that for Mr Petruck and Evelyn Roll, I thought to myself, recalling two patients with advanced congestive heart failure.

This morning, I see Mr Petruck on my patient list. I know it will take at least 5 minutes to go through my pile of unfiled references. Where can I go to review the evidence from the RALES trial?

This is a job for the Turning Research Into Practice (TRIP) database (www.tripdatabase.com), another site worth bookmarking for ease of return visits.

Turning Research Into Practice is a great site that catalogs and organizes a variety of evidence-based summaries and clinical practice guidelines. Results of every search get reported according to a user-friendly hierarchy.

- **Evidence-based direct links** gives you a web link directly to the source.

Do you have questions about how to use the Internet for clinical practice? Have you found some effective cybersearch strategies that you would like to share with readers of *Canadian Family Physician*? Questions, dilemmas, and solutions are all welcome. E-mail me at risdonc@fhs.mcmaster.ca

Examples of primary sources include the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and *Canadian Family Physician's* own Critical Appraisals.

- **Evidence-based indirect links** takes you to another site that you need to search. It has very good content, but is slightly less convenient.
- **Peer-reviewed journals** provides direct links to relevant articles in the *British Medical Journal*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and so on.
- **Guidelines** links you to clinical practice guidelines (including Canadian Medical Association guidelines).

Entering “spironolactone” into the search box, I receive several hits. I click on “evidence-based direct links” and find three top-quality links (including the Critical Appraisal by Lock and Chun published in *Canadian Family Physician* in November 1999). The two review articles are less than a page long, so I can easily compare the bottom line of the trial to the case I am about to see.

I realize Mr Petruck’s disease is not severe enough to qualify him for spironolactone. I make a note, however, of what to watch for in

his chart. Should his condition worsen, I will know exactly what to do (including making a quick trip to the TRIP database!) ❖

Dr Risdon practises family medicine in Hamilton, Ont, and teaches in the Department of Family Medicine at McMaster University.