

The Canadian Health Network

A new kind of referral

If you are at all familiar with the growing phenomenon of patients bringing health-related Internet printouts to their doctor's office, you might want to know a bit about the Canadian Health Network (CHN).

Initiated in 1999 by Health Canada and now funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the CHN strives to be the best on-line one-stop shop for Canadians seeking reliable, up-to-date health promotion and disease prevention information. The information presented on the website is contributed by several Canadian non-profit organizations who are affiliates of the CHN. Physicians can refer their patients to the CHN with confidence, knowing that the information is approved by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Handy features of the site include an index, a search function, frequently asked questions, and a health information request that enables visitors to e-mail their health questions and receive a reply within 5 business days.

Content is managed by affiliates across the country who offer their expertise in specific areas. For example, the Canadian Diabetes Association is the diabetes affiliate, Sunnybrook and

Women's College Health Sciences Centre is the women's health affiliate, and Edmonton-based Capital Health is the cardiovascular disease and stroke affiliate. Twenty affiliates in total cover a range of topics.

Searching for answers to health questions on the World Wide Web is often hit or miss at best. Many health consumers access American sites or get flooded with advertising. They can be confused or overwhelmed by the amount of potentially unsafe or inaccurate information they find. And most physicians do not have the time to review or validate the information patients bring to them. This is where the CHN comes in. Benefiting doctors and patients alike, it is the next best thing to

health education in doctors' offices.

For more information about the CHN, please visit www.canadian-health-network.ca or contact **Julie Dixon**, Promotions Specialist, Capital Health, at (780) 407-8000 or juliedixon@cha.ab.ca or **Joanne Edwards-Miller**, Project Coordinator, Canadian Diabetes Association, at (416) 408-7123. 