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Pro Patiente, the first hungarian web site on health and medicine

Introduction

First of all I would like to thank for the opportunity to be here and present this project we have been working on since 1995. Both of us are medical doctors, outsiders in this field, although we have long followed the developments in health information closely and enthusiastically.

Pro Patiente, our independent web site offering free access was launched at the end of 1995, spurred by the recognition that there is a complete gap in medical information in Hungarian on the Internet. The National Health Insurance sponsored our first steps with a grant, and NIIF hosted us on its main computer. Our service started before the steep upsurge in the number of commercial web sites occurred and was among the pioneers in Hungary.

Activities

Pro Patiente offers orientation in health care for the general reader. It provides information on prevention and treatment of diseases, attempts to give an overview of recent advances in medicine and gives advice for a healthy life style.

Health professionals find information, gathered from a multitude of sources, on different branches of medicine. Access to data is quick and easy.

Medline only indexes few Hungarian publications. We hope that by presenting abstracts from leading Hungarian journals in English, we can be instrumental in boosting international awareness of Hungarian medicine.

Hardware and software

Hardware and software are very simple; hence we will not go into details.

Web Design

Our web design is simple, as we kept those with slow or limited access to the Internet in mind. We hope that navigation through the site is transparent.

The expansion of our material, however, necessitates restructuring and the introduction of new features.

Structure of the site

The information compiled on this site is presently arranged according to source. Pro Patiente is divided into two sections, health and medical, and there is a seamless crossing over between them. For legal and ethical reasons some of the articles are accessible to registered users only. Registration is free, nonetheless. The site is indexed and searchable.

The site mostly comprises static HTML pages, but we have already included a database of congresses that is editable by users through a web interface. We plan to set up further similar interactive features.

In the health section users find HTML excerpts from „The Family Doctor”, a book renowned throughout Hungary, and the full text version of another book for heart patients. Readers find articles on a wide range of topics from popular medicine by courtesy of Kisalföld, a major daily newspaper in Győr, and the medicine related articles of Hungary’s leading daily newspaper, Népszabadság. The latter section is updated daily. An online version of „Alternative Medicine”, a monthly journal, and some outdated pages of the Social Security Health Fund are also available. The site relies on foreign sources as well: it contains the pages of the well known, Canada based, International Health News, and the Hungarian translation of selected articles from the New York Times Health News Service, which collects its materials from Medical Tribune, Bloomberg News, Lancet etc.

The medical section boasts a range of original medical publications, summaries and reviews written by colleagues exclusively for our web site. These are naturally peer -reviewed, like all other materials. The bulk of the medical section is made up of searchable abstracts of 16 important Hungarian medical journals. (Three of these are included in their entirety.). Three medical journals on the site have no printed versions, they only appear electronically. These are supported by medical societies and reviewed by large editorial boards.

The most important medical publishers are also present, and maintain online book ordering systems

Unofficial pages of organizations are included too. We have established a searchable and editable congress calendar. Pharmweb, a U.K. based web

site is mirrored for pharmaceutical information, and we have compiled a small Internet tutorial for health professionals.

A smaller English service is at the foreign reader's disposal. The section includes the aforementioned English abstracts from Hungarian medical journals, and articles from NYT News Service, updated daily.

Statistics

Over the last two years we have compiled about 120 Mbytes of material. On average we register 60,000 accesses a month and the medical section has more than 2000 registered users.

Next steps

1.

We plan to revamp the site and give it a new design. Materials will be integrated in a highly automated database with advanced search capabilities. This is necessary, as we are only two people working part time on maintaining the service.

Interactivity will be increased; we would like to give our partners the opportunity to upload their own materials.

The launching of new features is among our plans: a complete drug directory accessible on two levels: OTC drugs for the general public and full range of drugs for professionals. A Web CD of Family Doctor is being prepared.

Health dictionaries for the layman and a database of medical services are planned, in order to help orientation of the patients.

We hope to publish more full text medical journals.

Electronic publishing

It is common knowledge that the electronic media is cost-effective, fast and flexible, and there is an unknown potential in multimedia applications. This new medium poses new problems too, nonetheless, which I only want to mention briefly. These are copyright problems and personality rights of people appearing in front of the wide audience of the Internet.

The advertising of drugs is anything but unproblematic.

The medical community's attitude is ambivalent towards electronic media: the validity of publications is questioned, as anyone with some knowledge of HTML and access to a server on the Internet can publish anything. Citation

of references is also difficult, as servers come and go, pages get outdated or are removed.

One of the most important questions remains open: financing.