



8th Congress of the European Society of Contraception
"A holistic approach to sexual health: is it needed, appropriate and possible"
23-26 June 2004
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

Report from Workshop session 10:
" Contraception in cyberland: triple Dutch "
Saturday 26 June 2004, 08:30-10:00

Experts: Dr. Rob Beerthuisen, Dr. Hans van der Slikke - Chair: Dr. Olga Loeber
(The Netherlands)

The topic of this lively, well-attended session was the importance of the Internet, not only for education of our patients: it is as well a huge resource of information for ourselves as professionals.

Dr Beerthuisen gave a demonstration of the ESC site (<http://www.contraception-esc.com>), a field where he feels at ease. Directly on line he demonstrated many links to sites where information about contraception can be found, following the lines of his recent paper in Gynaecology Forum. (http://www.obgyn.net/displayarticle.asp?page=/medforum2003/medforum2003_review04)
The take home message: "The Internet can help physicians update their knowledge and skills and provide their patients with high-standard and reliable information."

In his second presentation, titled "Prescription online: the one-hour after pill is more efficient than the morning after pill" he showed the way Internet could be instrumental in the prescription of contraceptives. He also argued that his online prescription of the morning after pill helped the case of providing emergency contraception without prescription in The Netherlands.

Dr Hans van der Slikke simulated a survey he did during the conference of the Dutch Contraception Society (October 2003) concerning service sites. Service sites are websites that pharmaceutical companies build to give the users of their products (for example the contraceptive pill) more information about the drug (for example what advice should be given when one or two tablets have been forgotten, how to use the pill on holidays etc.).

The survey was done in order to see what healthcare providers think about this concept. In an interactive session he asked the audience the same questions. The only difference between the Dutch doctors and the audience in Edinburgh was that the first were much more suspicious about the quality of information given by pharmaceutical companies. *The overall agreement was that developing such sites is a good and useful policy.*

The last presentation dealt with the way Internet can be used to find evidence-based information. Van der Slikke demonstrated the impossibility to keep up to date with literature these days. However in our work we daily feel suddenly an urgent need for information.

The evidence method implies a good search strategy, for example using the PICO-method, where P= patient, I= intervention, C= comparison and O= Outcome. He explained why for this purpose we easily could start with the Cochrane library, which contains more than 5000 clinical trials. For literature, more recent than the meta-analysis, we can add a search in other databases like Pubmed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi>) or/and Embase. (www.embase.com). The Internet answers questions that arise during daily practice. The next step will be that our electronic patient record links directly to these resources of knowledge. Take home message: *without the Internet no evidence available.*

In conclusion both speakers convincingly showed that the Internet couldn't be missed anymore. Doctors should be aware of information spread through Internet, which is also freely available for the consumers.

O. Loeber, 19/8/2004