

Health and Medical Law Resources

by Jeanne Ullian

Quality health and medical resources of interest to the legal practitioner are available both in libraries and on the Internet. Many of the Internet resources, whether from government agencies or private entities, are free and user-friendly.

PubMed (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez) is the preeminent resource for identifying and locating medical journal articles. Subject specialists at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) index the articles in Medline, a database of more than five thousand selected journals. PubMed coverage of Medline is from 1950. Print products such as *Index Medicus* provide journal indexing from 1879. Searching PubMed is free. Utilize the drop-down boxes to limit your search; however, do not be fooled by the simplicity of the Entrez search engine. For specific subject searches, enlist the assistance of a medical librarian who is familiar with MeSH—the controlled vocabulary used by the Medline indexers. With this help, you restrict your search to the most relevant articles. All entries in PubMed include a complete citation and many also include an abstract. The LinkOut feature alerts you to the availability of full text on publisher or third-party Web sites, including libraries with print or electronic holdings and related resources.

MedlinePlus (<http://medlineplus.gov>) is a complementary Web site from the NLM that provides free and reliable health and medical resources for professionals and consumers. Use it to familiarize yourself with a disease or condition as well as to find those keywords that will improve your search in PubMed or other medical and legal databases. Don't miss the link to Drugs and Supplements. If you usually rely on the *Physicians' Desk Reference* (PDR) for drug information, try this online resource that provides the same

PDR information for most products plus additional helpful information from medical professionals.

The **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services** site (www.cms.hhs.gov) provides searchable, full-text access to the Centers for Medicaid Services manuals and transmittals, as well as other related information. If you are new to this area and find the government site overwhelming, use **HCPRO Boot Camps** (www.hcprobootcamps.com/links/index.cfm) as your entry point. It simplifies the task of finding coding sources (CPT, ICD-9-CM), billing and compliance resources, and full-text statutes and regulations. Another related resource, if fraud and abuse are topics of interest, is the Web site of the **Office of the Inspector General** (<http://oig.hhs.gov>).

The **American Health Lawyers Association** (AHLA) (www.healthlawyers.org) is the major membership organization for health-care attorneys. Even if you do not join, you will find many useful free resources on this site, including nineteen subject-specific electronic mailing lists. Look to AHLA for continuing education and publications on timely topics.

Sign up for the free alert service from **Horty Springer** (www.hortyspringer.com), which describes itself as the first law firm to devote itself entirely to health-care law. In my estimation, this site has the best and most useful list of health-care links for the legal professional.

The **Virginia Medical Law Report** (www.vamedicalaw.com) from *Virginia Lawyers Weekly* is a bimonthly publication available free to medical professionals and for a nominal subscription fee to others. The current

issue and an archive back to 2004 are available as PDFs.

The **National Center for Assisted Living** (www.ncal.org/about/state_review.cfm) provides a state-by-state summary of assisted-living regulations in twenty-one categories as well as other related consumer information.

Some quick picks include the following:

- Certificates of Need (www.ncsl.org/programs/health/cert-need.htm) from the National Conference of State Legislatures
- Licensing (www.dhp.virginia.gov) from the Virginia Department of Health Professions
- Case Law research (www.vsb.org) through Fastcase (access free to members of the Virginia State Bar)
- Antitrust issues (www.ftc.gov/bc/healthindex.shtm) from the Federal Trade Commission

Virginia's three academic medical libraries allow public access and have skilled medical librarians on staff. Check their Web sites for information on hours and services. (Eastern Virginia Medical School's Edward E. Bricknell Medical Sciences Library at www.evms.edu/evmslib/index.html, University of Virginia Health System's Claude Moore Health Sciences Library at www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/library/, and Virginia Commonwealth University's Tompkins — McCaw Library for the Health Sciences at www.library.vcu.edu/tml/.)

WorldCat (www.worldcat.org) provides access to the catalogs of many public and academic libraries and some private libraries. Search free to see which libraries have the journal or treatise you need. Enter your location and the

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results will be ordered by geographical proximity.

For help, ask a librarian. Visit, call, or e-mail a medical reference librarian at Eastern Virginia, U.Va., or VCU. Don't expect them to be available 24/7, but do expect them to be helpful and reliable. You also can start with a librarian in your firm, public law library, or

public library. We work together to make sure our users receive the service and information they need. ☺



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