

# Introduction



How to Find Reliable **HIV/AIDS** Treatment  
Information on the Internet



## Introduction

- Many HIV/AIDS treatment resources can be accessed on the Internet
- Some valuable resources will be highlighted in this course

*How to Find Reliable HIV/AIDS Treatment Information on the Internet* 

## Evaluating Internet Resources

- Information on the Internet may be inaccurate
- Be savvy - evaluate the information you find

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## Why the Internet?

- **Abundance of FREE information**
  - ▶ Medical journals/databases
  - ▶ Prescription drugs
  - ▶ Clinical trials
  - ▶ Treatment options

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## Why the Internet?

- **24-hour availability**
- **Current awareness**
- **Ability to connect with people with similar medical problems**
- **Anonymity/privacy (look for privacy notices)**

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## Currentness

- Is there a date? What does the date represent?
- Is the information up to date?
- Is the update frequency apparent?
- Is the information static or does it change regularly?
- Is currentness necessary for this type of information?

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## Authority

- Who is the author?
- Is information available about the author?
- Is the author the original creator of the information?
- What are the author's credentials?
- What is the author's occupation?
- What is the author's education?

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## Accuracy

- Is the information reliable?
- Is the information free from error?
- Where does the information come from?
- Are sources cited? Can you independently verify the information?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?

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## Cases of Inaccurate Information on the Web

- **Many home HIV test kits sold over the Internet supply inaccurate results according to the Federal Trade Commission**
  - ▶ Correct information:
  - ▶ Only one home test is reliable, as per the Food and Drug Administration: Home Access Express HIV-I Test System.

Source: *USA Today*, 6/21/99, p. 5D

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## Cases of Inaccurate Information on the Web

- Johns Hopkins University's and C. Everett Koop's Web sites were slow to add information on new hepatitis treatments

Source: National Public Radio, 1999

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## Affiliation

- Affiliation = Publisher
- What institution is connected with this information?
- Does the institution exercise quality control?

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## Purpose

- Web sites can blend advertising, entertainment, and information
- What is the purpose of this Web site?

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## Objectivity

- Is there a minimum of bias?
- Is there any apparent conflict, such as advertising by the sponsor?

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## Audience

- **Who is the intended audience?**
  - ▶ Professionals
  - ▶ Consumers
  - ▶ Patients

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## Coverage

- **What topics are included?**
- **What is the depth of exploration?**
- **Has unfavorable information been omitted?**

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## Buying Drugs Online

- **Is the site a licensed pharmacy in good standing?**
  - ▶ National Association of Boards of Pharmacy:  
[www.nabp.net](http://www.nabp.net), or call 847-698-6227
- **Are the drugs for sale approved by the Federal Drug Administration?**
- **Are the drugs for sale by prescription only?**
- **Is a physical exam required for a first time prescription?**

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## Buying Drugs Online

- **Is a registered pharmacist available to answer questions?**
- **Does the site provide identification and a U.S. address?**
- **Is a phone number provided in case you have a question or problem?**

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## Buying Drugs Online

- **Stay away from sites that**
  - ▶ Advertise a "new cure" for a serious disorder or a quick cure-all for a wide range of ailments
  - ▶ Use impressive-sounding terminology to disguise a lack of good science or those that claim the government, the medical profession, or research scientists have conspired to suppress a product
  - ▶ Include undocumented case histories claiming "amazing" results

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## Locating Information on the World Wide Web

- **Use a search directory/engine to find Web sites**
  - ▶ Read the Help section for tips to refine your search
- **Be persistent**
- **Ask a librarian for assistance**

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## Locating Information on a Web Site

- Look for topics of interest to click on
- Look for a site map
- Look for a search tool for the site
- Look for a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) selection

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## Starting Points

- **AIDSinfo**  
**<http://actis.org>**
  - ▶ The latest federally-approved information on HIV/AIDS clinical research, treatment and prevention, for consumers and healthcare providers
  - ▶ Drug information database
  - ▶ Treatment guidelines
  - ▶ HIV/AIDS vaccine research

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## Starting Points

- **AIDS Education Global Information System (AEGIS)**  
**<http://www.aegis.org>**
  - ▶ Comprehensive coverage - large HIV/AIDS Web site
  - ▶ Compiled for inclusiveness, not quality
  - ▶ Updated frequently
  - ▶ HIV Daily Briefing on home page
  - ▶ Site search engine

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## Starting Points

- **AIDS Treatment Data Network**  
**<http://atdn.org>**
  - ▶ About 30 simple fact sheets on treatment topics
  - ▶ Treatment Review
  - ▶ Contains some Spanish resources

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## Starting Points

- **HIV InSite**  
**<http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu>**
  - ▶ Mostly practitioner-oriented
  - ▶ Well-organized links
  - ▶ Treatment guidelines
  - ▶ Knowledge Base - treatment textbook

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## Starting Points

- **Johns Hopkins AIDS Service**  
**<http://www.hopkins-aids.edu>**
  - ▶ Mostly practitioner-oriented
  - ▶ Medical expert Q & A for patients and doctors

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## Starting Points

- **MEDLINEplus AIDS Information**  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/aids.html>
  - ▶ Web sites reviewed for quality
  - ▶ Broad coverage of topics

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## Starting Points

- **New Mexico AIDS InfoNet**  
<http://www.aidsinonet.org>
  - ▶ About 80 fact sheets on treatment topics
    - Written for 8th- or 9th-grade level
    - Reviewed by a medical doctor
    - Available also in Spanish

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## Starting Points

- **Project Inform**  
<http://www.projectinform.org>
  - ▶ About 80 fact sheets on treatment topics
    - Technical, but readable
    - “Introductory Packet”
    - Medical review not mentioned
    - Many items also in Spanish

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## Criteria for Web Sites in This Document

- **Treatment information**
- **Emphasis on nonprofit or government**
- **Emphasis on information for patients**
- **National focus**
- **Unique information**

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## Last Word

- **Use your professional judgment and these criteria to evaluate information on the Internet**
- **Consult your health care professional before making any treatment decisions**

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