

Editorial: Anesthesia and Cyberspace

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Abstract

By now, millions of individuals daily exchange data and ideas over the information superhighway. Having 4 computing centers connected to the Internet in 1969, the number of connected computers grew to a 100 in 1977, to a 1000 in 1984, to 10,000 in 1987, to 1 million in 1991 and to 10 millions in 1996 ¹. An estimated 35 million households will be using the Internet by the year 2000 ². Including all controlled-access Internets, so-called Intranets this number is expected to grow to over 100 million by the year 2000 ³.

What has the Internet to offer for the anesthesiologic community? What impact will this superhighway of information have on the field of Anesthesiology? An increasing number of anesthesia-related netsurfers are visiting anesthesia networks, electronic publications and tutorials or other services offered throughout the Internet. A variety of different services such as E-mail, Gopher, FTP, Telnet, Usenet Newsgroups, and most important the World Wide Web (WWW) are currently available for the anesthesiologist and anesthesiologist ^{4, 5, 6, 7}.

Imagine a meeting where you could present your research to ten thousands of people from all over the world - and you wouldn't even be restricted to the normally allotted ten minutes time frame! Instead, other members of the international anesthesiology community can study your work at their own convenience, 24 hours a day, every week, for a full month, and even thereafter.

And imagine also that you yourself are interested in reading about the newest ongoing research from other important centers around the world - how about having access to it whenever you want, in your home, office, a hotel room, the anesthesia lounge or any place else where there is a computer with a connection to the Internet. And best of all, you don't have to travel or go to the mailbox or search in a library or even pay for it - now the newest and best in anesthesia comes to you, whenever you want it, and it is absolutely free, the only thing you need is access to the

Internet.

The amount of information offered on the net is increasing rapidly. A variety of anesthesia-related resources are available on the Internet. Several anesthesia societies are represented by their Home Page and offer information about meetings or the society itself. A growing number of Anesthesia Departments all over the world go online with information about their programs and Universities. Several sites offer extended services such as tutorials, electronic handouts, news letters, discussion forums, or support in anesthesia-related problems. Anesthesia-related publications such as this electronic Internet Journal of Anesthesiology provide interested readers with abstracts, articles, research-news, discussion forums, job advertising, and information about new drugs and monitoring devices. With further development of computer technology it will be easier to offer live 3D animation, educational movies, and live video conferencing ⁽⁸⁾.

Well designed anesthesia sites on the Internet such as Keith Ruskin's GASNet, The Swiss Anesthesia Server, Gasbone, The Virtual Anesthesia Textbook, and many other sites in Europe, Australia and the U.S. represent excellent starting points for anesthesia-surfing on the Internet. Future development of faster Internet access such as connection through cable-TV fibers or satellites and faster personal computers will enhance the ability of efficient netsurfing. New software-technology will increase the attractivity of websites. In summary, the Internet with its World Wide Web represents a new tool for the anesthesiologist or anesthesiologist to share ideas, experience and knowledge with others around the world.

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