
Internet and Mexican Anesthesiology

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Citation

L Guerra. *Internet and Mexican Anesthesiology*. The Internet Journal of Anesthesiology. 1996 Volume 1 Number 2.

Abstract

I. INTRODUCTION

Using the Internet in any field means communication without distance limitations, through an endless number of computers, which are called web of networks. This system gives us unlimited access to all the information available on the information highway. Today, the Internet is an integral part of our productive lives as a working tool and teaching aid, as well as a source of information, news and entertainment. The Internet is the largest computer network in the world. It links thousands of networks at the same time, allowing communication among people from different places in different countries. People can send and receive information in the form of text, documents, plots, pictures, sound, etc. Through the Internet distances seem to disappear, and in most countries the cost of this communication is relatively little (usually equivalent to a local phone call). For the first time in history, humans are capable of searching, creating and sending information in real time among a population of more than 55 million people.

The Internet gives the people of this world something they aspired to for decades, an open forum where information, ideas and projects can be shared. This forum is a free, democratic, and usually non-profit place in cyberspace. Due to its unique characteristics, the Internet is a place where we can access previously unknown places from other latitudes, getting to know cultures and ways of living ignored up to now. Ideally, with this information network, nobody should lack access to information anymore.

At the present time, more than one hundred countries are connected via the Internet. By 1996 the total number of computers hooked to this system was larger than 8.5 millions. Every year, the number of computers that gain access to the system is duplicated; this makes the Internet the largest network with world wide coverage. The Internet also has exceeded, statistically, even the most optimistic predictions. In the future, information exchange through

networks will become an everyday activity.

II. FORMS OF COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET

1. Communication among people via electronic mail: This form permits sending messages or letters through computers. E-mail is very efficient because it takes only few seconds and the recipient doesn't need to be present or have his computer turned on to receive it.
2. Access to Information sources: In this way we can obtain information from distant computers to use it in different ways. We are able to have access to the information available through institutions, universities, libraries, and businesses.
3. Publication of information on the Internet: The Internet permits an interactive communication. In the same way we have access to the international information, we can also publish information, and thereby distribute it around the world. It's important to remember that already today there are about 55 million Internet users, and this number is growing every day.

III. HISTORY

The origins of the Internet can be traced back to the sixties when the USA promoted a project for military defense. This project was sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA), and its goal was to create a network of interconnected computers. In 1969 scientists working on this project connected two computers via telephone lines, developing at the same time the communication protocol for them. This communication protocol is still used today. Years later, some universities got connected among themselves and also to DARPA, creating in this way ARPANET. In 1987 ARPANET split into two

independent networks with different goals: MILnet (Intercommunication among military organizations) and NSFnet (intercommunication among universities and other academic institutions). NSFnet (National Science Foundation) evolved into what we today know as the Internet. In April 1995, NSFnet ceased operations, giving room to the creation of private companies that offer connection services to Internet. At the same time tools and applications (Explorer, Netscape, etc.) were developed that allow easy access and use of Internet.

IV. INTERNET AND MEXICAN MEDICINE

In the case of Mexico, compared to more developed countries, there are only relatively few people in the medical field that have access to the Internet. At the moment, the Mexican physician can use the Internet from medical institutions, universities, businesses, private hospitals, colleges, libraries, and few other working places. It is estimated that 15 % of the medical community has a personal computer either at home or the office . From these, only about one fifth has access to the Internet. Therefore we can approximate that only 3 % of Mexican doctors use the Internet. This figure is slowly rising, mainly due to the realization among physicians that there is a huge potential for improving their medical practice through the access to a large amount of information via computers. Together with

medical journals, conferences and specialized courses the Internet becomes a wonderful tool for the doctor to keep his knowledge up to date.

The Internet is also a tremendous source of supporting resources for all areas of the medical profession, including teaching, research, distribution, exchange of opinions, diagnostics, and publication. Most of the larger social security medical institutions in Mexico already have their own home pages (website). This is not the case for the various medical specialties. In particular, we did not have a site on the Internet for anesthesia until recently when we created the Mexican Anesthesiology Network (<http://www.anestesia.com.mx>). The purpose of this site is to create a place for Mexican anesthesiologists to express their opinions, publish their experiences, keep up with the newest research, and to communicate with other anesthesiologists and physicians of other disciplines from all around the world.

I wish to thank Olivier Wenker, MD for his support to the Mexican Anesthesiology Network and for his invitation to collaborate with this article on the Internet Scientific Publications website. I hope I have offered you a real view of the possibilities the Internet has to offer the medical professionals in Mexico.

References

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