

■ ANESTHESIOLOGY WEB SITE REVIEWS

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Virtual Anaesthesia Textbook

URL: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/anaes/VAT/VAT.html>, mirrored at <http://gasnet.med.yale.edu/vat>

Institutions: University of Sydney and others

Authors/WebMasters: Chris Thompson, M.D. and VAT volunteers

Perhaps the greatest problem now facing the WWW is its size and complexity. There are thousands of Websites covering medicine alone, and possibly hundreds of sites covering areas of interest to anesthesiologists. WWW resources frequently move or change addresses, and new sites are created regularly. This can make finding information about a particular topic difficult and time consuming.

Search engines such as Alta Vista and Lycos or indices like Yahoo or the *GASNet* WWW Virtual Library (Anesthesiology) make finding information somewhat easier, although it is possible to miss an important resource simply because it was not indexed in a specific category. The Virtual Anaesthesia Textbook (VAT) is an attempt to catalog and review important resources on the WWW. The VAT is organized by Chris Thompson, who has dozens of volunteer "chapter organizers" regularly search the WWW, looking for sites that meet standards of quality and reliability. The links are organized into chapters, each of which is a list of links with a review of each site and a short description of what it offers.

Quality of information

Chapter organizers are chosen for their interest or expertise in the given area. Most of the reviews are accurate, concise, and well written. There is, however, some variability from chapter to chapter (and author to author), and some of the chapters accept commercial advertising.

Quality of Links

Nearly all chapters are updated regularly, and all links are current and relevant to the specialty. The VAT is an interesting resource because many of the links are to resources that contain important information but are not necessarily labeled as anesthesiology sites.

Search Capabilities

The VAT offers simple key word searches, the results of which are returned in no particular order. The search engine does not locate a particular link but rather returns the chapter or chapters that contain the specified key words in their reviews.

Summary

The VAT is well organized and informative. It offers links to resources that are valuable to clinicians and researchers in anesthesia and in other medical specialties. The VAT and other indices will become even more valuable as the number of resources on the WWW continues to grow.

Reviewer

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