

Web report

ICU-USA

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Reported: 7 November 2002

Published online: 6 January 2003

This article is online at <http://ccforum.com/content/7/1/97>

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Critical Care 2003, **7**:97 (DOI 10.1186/cc1858)

Website ICU-USA

URL <http://www.icu-usa.com>

Cost Free

Keywords cardiopulmonary resuscitation, critical care, intensive care unit, terminal care

ICU-USA.com (owned and developed by ICU-USA.com, Inc.) is a website created by intensive care unit (ICU) staff to explain, in layman's terms, the type of medical care that may be observed in an ICU. In order to explore this site, I used common critical care scenarios (e.g. pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome) and enlisted the help of several laypersons.

Although the initial page would have benefited from a search engine, I did find a medical and a pharmacology glossary, which provide an impressive list of definitions. I next explored the ICU Medical Information section, and was pleased to find that most topics offered reasonable explanations, and issues such as patient discomfort, and duration and possible complications of treatments were included. There was some discrepancy noted in the depth of coverage of the topics (e.g. delirium as compared with diabetes). In the anaemia section there was an overemphasis on erythropoietin and its use for ICU-related anaemia. (The latter topic referenced Ortho Biotech Inc. among its links, which might represent a conflict of interest.) Another strength of this site is its broad coverage of topics, including legal rights of the patient, living wills, 'do not resuscitate' orders, advanced directives and life after the ICU.

My layperson test group found it difficult to understand some of the terms used and needed my guidance regarding appropriate bookmarks. Certain topics were included that are not relevant to a lay audience, such as prediction models and the Acute Physiology and Chronic Health Evaluation score. I noted a lack of hyperlinks between topics (e.g. haemothorax did not link to chest tubes), which might also have facilitated navigation of this site. On the other hand, most topics provided excellent links to other websites.

Overall, I would recommend this website. It is available to anyone with Internet access, and no special software or browser is required. The site is aesthetically pleasant and reasonable to navigate. It is endorsed by the Society of Critical Care Medicine and the American Association of Critical Care Nurses.

Best feature

There is excellent breadth of topics (especially legal issues and after-ICU care).

Worst feature

The lack of hyperlinks and some sophisticated terminology render this site somewhat difficult for the layperson to navigate.

Wish list

Hyperlinks to link the various related topics are desirable.

Other links

Sanford Guide – <http://www.sanfordguide.com>

This antibiotic guide is available in print, or as a web or handheld resource, costing \$8.50–25.00.

Epocrates ID – <http://www.epocrates.com>

This is a free handheld application with antibiotic and infectious diseases information, but it has no direct web interface.

Competing interests

None declared