

Web report

Antibiotic guide

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Website Johns Hopkins Division of Infectious Diseases Antibiotic Guide

URL <http://www.hopkins-abxguide.org>

Cost Free, following a brief registration process

Keywords antibiotics, communicable diseases, guidelines, infection

The Antibiotic Guide is a clinically oriented database developed by Johns Hopkins infectious disease and pharmacology personnel. It is described as a decision support tool for clinicians. The guide has two components: a main database of more than 160 antibiotics, which can be searched by entering a search term or by choosing a drug name, diagnosis or pathogen; and a feature area including news of recent journal articles, reports, and a question-and-answer forum. All the information is peer-reviewed by Johns Hopkins staff, and each section explicitly states the sources (largely the opinion of Johns Hopkins experts and guidelines, if available) and links to a clear disclaimer page.

Users are required to register, and there is an initial log-in page that is a mild annoyance. The site is easy to navigate after this, facilitated by each topic having a standardised layout (e.g. diagnostic criteria, common pathogens, treatment regimens) and points specific to the condition. The information is clearly presented, mostly in point form, with hyperlinks to related topics. The author's name and the date of the last update are clearly apparent. At the end of each topic, there is a reference list with helpful descriptive comments on each paper.

The database is also 'mobile', with an auto-updating version for personal digital assistants. This provides point-of-care access to most of the information in the database, and could potentially be a very powerful tool for the busy clinician. The palm version worked well, but our attempts to run it on a pocket PC proved difficult.

What is in it for Johns Hopkins? Data collection. Upon registration, all users are requested to provide information on their antibiotic choices. The organisers admit to selling some

data to support the website, but also hope to study prescribing patterns and antibiotic resistance.

Best feature

It is more than just an antibiotic datasheet, it is a clinical decision support tool – and it is free.

Worst feature

A microbiological opinion that may be too regional to be applicable globally.

Wish list

An external peer review and a foolproof mobile version.

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