Health Consumer Information in a Quality-Controlled Gateway
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Abstract. Internet has become a major source of health information but medical information retrieval remains difficult for both the health professional and the patients. In this poster we describe CISMeF-patients which is a sub-part of CISMeF, a structured quality-controlled subject gateway. CISMeF-patients has been designed for the patients, their families and the general public who are often unfamiliar with the medical domain and vocabulary. The CISMeF-patients resources are described using the Dublin Core metadata and are indexed thanks to a terminology which 'encapsulates' the MeSH thesaurus. Unlike Medline-plus and Medline, CISMeF-patients and CISMeF share the same terminology. Therefore a CISMeF-patients end-user can extend his query into the CISMeF catalogue (e.g. to search for teaching resources or clinical guidelines).

Background. The amount of health data accessible on the Web is increasing. Until recently, databases such as Medline were available only to experts but now the importance of the Internet as a source for health information for the layperson is increasingly acknowledged. This kind of users need support: they cannot assess themselves of the information quality and they are not always familiar with the medical domain and vocabulary. The objective of CISMeF [http://www.chu-rouen.fr/cismef] (Catalogue and Index of French-speaking resources) is to assist the health professional during the search of electronic information available on the Internet. CISMeF references high quality information resources. The sub-catalogue CISMeF-patients has been designed in 1997 to assist the patients and the general public.

Methods. The CISMeF resources (n=10,070) are described using metadata and a specific terminology. Metadata allows the information container of a resource to be indexed and the CISMeF terminology allows the informational contents to be indexed. The metadata element set is composed by the Dublin Core metadata plus specific elements to CISMeF. The CISMeF terminology 'encapsulates' the MeSH thesaurus. The metaterms (n=60) and resource types (n=115) were added to cope with the relative restrictive nature of the MeSH terms when searching 'guidelines in cardiology' or 'databases in virology' where 'cardiology' and 'virology' are metaterms and 'guidelines' and 'databases' are resource types. The resource types are a generalization of the publication types of Medline. To catalogue new
good quality information resources the methodology involves a four-fold process: resource collection, filtering, description and indexing.

Results. In CISMeF-patients (n=1,200) popularized synonyms were associated to the terms at each level of the CISMeF model. The synonyms are terms used in the popular language (e.g. 'mania' is a popular synonym of 'bipolar disorder').

The navigation can be done through an index of medical specialties (n=34). A general index of all terms used in CISMeF-patients is also available (n=343). The tree structures are visualized in a simplified way. To search information, preformatted queries on Doc'CISMeF the search tool associated to CISMeF are generated automatically when a user click a keyword link. Therefore, the user is neither obliged to know the MeSH keyword, nor the query language and the Doc'CISMeF search tool. Another type of access is available via the 'life periods' (e.g. birth, aged). By clicking the links, it is possible to obtain automatically the related information resources of these periods. Currently it is already in use by several patient association libraries.

Discussion. Medline-plus, developed by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) is a similar catalogue dedicated to the patients. The principal difference between Medline-plus and CISMeF-patients is the structure of the terminology. CISMeF-patients and CISMeF share the same terminology whereas Medline-plus and Medline do not. Another terminology has been built for Medline-plus. CISMeF-patients and CISMeF share also the same search tool Doc'CISMeF. The benefit of sharing the same terminology and search tool, is the possibility to extend the patient query to another one using another resource type than patient, in particular 'clinical guidelines' for evidence based medicine resources, or 'education' for teaching resources. CISMeF-patients thanks to its useful interface, face the problems of query formulation: the user have only to click on the different links; the articulation of the needs is then facilitated; the patients cannot make mistakes or use the wrong medical terms (thanks to the synonyms); the resources are written for the patients, so there is no problem of understanding the query result; and finally the content of the catalogue is organized and indexed. Using CISMeF and CISMeF-patients the users don't have to manually filter the information and assess themselves the quality. This task is in fact done by the librarians of the CISMeF team.