

Writer: Lena Baker
Contact: David Pedersen
Health Science Relations
(319) 335-8032
david-pedersen@uiowa.edu

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Division of Drug Information Service provides needed drug therapy information

IOWA CITY, Iowa – Pharmacists and other health care professionals need reliable, up-to-date drug information in order to provide the best care for their patients. Much of that information is available through a service division within the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy.

The College's Division of Drug Information Service (DDIS) was established in 1965. Its basic functions and activities are publishing, drug information service and instruction. The DDIS's mission is to provide drug information systems and services to the people of Iowa and throughout the world to improve human health care.

Two main components of the service are the Iowa Drug Information Service (IDIS) and the Iowa Drug Information Network (IDIN). The IDIS database is a bibliographic indexing service for 200 English language medical and pharmaceutical journals. This service focuses specifically on drug therapy and provides a mechanism to find information quickly and have it readily available.

IDIN is the center for the generation and communication of drug information to practitioners. Through its educational and service program, IDIN supports the drug information role of pharmacists providing pharmaceutical care throughout the state. Community pharmacists that take on a training role for senior pharmacy students receive a complimentary subscription to IDIN. There are also a growing number of community pharmacists and small hospitals that are seeing the benefit of an IDIN subscription.

Both the IDIS and IDIN services are subscription-based, although IDIS is now available free on the Web to UI faculty and students.

In addition to IDIS and IDIN, a new resource has been created for those interested in herbal medicines. HerbaLinks is a free service that evaluates other Web sites that provide information about herbal medicines and therapies.

"This site directs people to the best information about herbals quickly," said Hazel Seaba, director of the Iowa Drug Information Service. HerbaLinks can be accessed through the DDIS Web site.

The Division takes pride in making information quickly available to pharmacists with the IDIS database and the IDIN service. The lag time is much shorter than other bibliographic services. Most medical and pharmaceutical journal articles are on the IDIS Web site within two months of publication.

“Outreach is very important,” Seaba said. “By the use of IDIS and IDIN, the Division is making it easier for pharmacists to serve their patients.”

Ron Herman, director of the IDIN, said that his program was put into action partly because of placement needs for pharmacy students around the state.

“IDIN provides tools to enhance these learning sites,” Herman said. “Iowa pharmacies and pharmacists receive this drug information service in turn for supervising students.”

Both IDIS and IDIN provide benefits to individual pharmacists, pharmacies, pharmacy students and professors at the UI and around the world. The IDIS database is sold all over the world, having served subscribers in over 60 different countries since the mid-1960’s. Two-thirds of the subscriptions are outside of the United States.

“Pharmacists need the ability to have access to information no matter where they practice.” Herman said. “With IDIS, the article is right there.”

“Wherever you are, if you have a computer and the database or access to the Web, you can retrieve relevant information,” Seaba said. “This is a stand alone resource.”

For those interested in these services, the DDIS will have an exhibit at the UI Health Fair on Nov. 7. The fair will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the UI Fieldhouse.

For more information about the DDIS or for subscription information about the IDIS or IDIN, go to www.uiowa.edu/~idjs.

University of Iowa Health Care describes the partnership between the UI College of Medicine and the UI Hospitals and Clinics and the patient care, medical education and research programs and services they provide.