

***CENTER FOR DRUG INFORMATION & RESEARCH (CDIR)
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RELIABLE SOURCES OF DRUG INFORMATION

Professional Product Labels or Package Inserts, Product Monographs

The Internet has solved an old problem for pharmacists and other health professionals, Rapid access to drug information. At the same time one problem is solved another has been created. No one edits the vast amount of drug information on the Internet to ensure its quality and accuracy. Some Web sites may be accurate and useful while others offer information that only may be advertising or worse harmful.

One goal of the Center for Drug Information and Research (CDIR) is to provide links to useful, accurate drug information available on the Internet that are free to users. These articles will be placed on a special section of the CDIR for future reference.

Our first topic is Internet access to the prescribing information, professional product labels, that include drugs marketed in the U.S. These documents are an important source of drug information as they represent the legal basis for marketing a drug.

Professional product labels are often used by commercial publishers in databases that are sold for use on Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) or smartphones such as LexiComp. The professional product labels may be considered as the source material for these commercial publishers.

The first source that we would like to recommend is DailyMed (<http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/about.cfm>). The Web site is collaboration between the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM). The NLM is responsible for the operation of PubMed/Medline database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed>) that provides free searching for literature citations going back to the 1960s.

Professional product labels are accessed by entering a brand or generic name in the search box. We suggest that searches are done using the generic name as some brand names are different in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. DailyMed provides tabs to access information such as Adverse Reactions and Dosage and Administration. The font size is large enough for easy reading.

In addition to providing the text of the professional product label DailyMed features links to other useful information related to the drug:

1. Medline Plus – This is also a U.S. government Web site with information on wide variety of medical and drug information.
2. Find Clinical Trials – This is an international registry of clinical trials for drugs and medical devices and includes trials being conducted in Saudi Arabia.
3. Biochemical Data Summary – This is a database of unique bioinformatics and cheminformatics information that combines detailed drug, for example, chemical, pharmacological and pharmaceutical data, with comprehensive drug target information such as sequence, structure, and pathway) information.
4. Search PubMed Articles – This is a direct link the NLM's PubMed/Medline data base. For example, if you have accessed the professional product label for clopidogrel (Plavix) clicking on this link will take you directly to literature citations about clopidogrel.
5. Presence in Breast Milk – This link takes the user to another U.S. government Web site, LactMed. This is a free fully documented, peer reviewed database on drugs in breast milk. Again, if you have accessed the professional product label for clopidogrel you will find there is no information on this topic in LactMed.

LactMed will be the subject of a future article in this series.

A very useful feature of DailyMed is a dictionary function. If this function is turned on technical and medical terms in professional products labels have hyperlinks directly to a medical dictionary. This may be helpful for those whose second language is English or those who want to improve their medical vocabularies.

We suggest that if you are unfamiliar with a drug marketed in the U.S. DailyMed and the professional products labels are a good place to start.

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