

## PROVIDING RELIABLE PHARMACOVIGILANCE INFORMATION VIA THE WEB: THE EXPERIENCE OF AN ITALIAN WEB SITE

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The possibility given by the Internet to have access to updated medical information in real time makes it an essential tool for healthcare professionals education. Nevertheless, poor Italian healthcare professionals knowledge of English language and lack of time for finding information represent two big limits to a more appropriate and widespread use of the net for this purpose.

In order to provide accurate information on drug safety and to promote the reporting of adverse drug reactions among physicians, in June 1999 the Clinical Section of the Italian Society of Pharmacology created the website [www.farmacovigilanza.org](http://www.farmacovigilanza.org), now supported by the non-profit foundation "gianfranco ferro". The site provides free updated news published on the international literature and by Regulatory Agencies (FDA, EMEA, MCA, etc.), and translated into Italian, always in a brief and easy to read way. The site contains an online constantly updated pharmacovigilance course; a specific section is also dedicated to herbal remedies. Recently, a section dedicated to Cosmetovigilance has been added, with lessons, news and links concerning ACR (Adverse Cosmetic Reactions). Every month, registered members receive an e-mail with the list of new contents included.

Up to February 2007, the site counts over 600000 direct accesses and over 9000 healthcare professionals registered. Community pharmacists (over 1500), hospital physicians (over 1200) and general practitioners (over 1100) are top three represented categories. Health care professionals showed to appreciate this way of obtaining information on drug topics, which allows them to retrieve highly comprehensive and relevant information in a efficient and quick way.

On September 2006, a questionnaire has been sent to 402 registered users (those who have accessed to the restricted area at least 20 times) with the aim to assess their opinion on the website and, more in general, their sources of information for drug-related issues. A total of 140 feedbacks have been received. Overall, the majority of responders judged the site very objective and comprehensible. Over 82% of responders declared that the site has influenced their opinion and attitudes toward the safety of drugs. In particular, responders declared to pay more attention to drug interactions and to the safety profile of newly marketed drugs and to spend more time on communicating the risks of drug use to patients.