

# Computer database for doctors developed

UNI  
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Indian doctors will soon be tapping computer networks for quick diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

Serious efforts are on to bridge the gap between doctors and computer experts, attributed to non-inclusion of informatics in medical curricula, by the Special Interest Group on Medical Informatics (SIGMI) of the Computer Society of India.

According to the convenor of SIGMI, Dr A Indrayan, with the availability of "Medline" the rigours of manual searches through library stacks, are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. However, Indian medical literature is still to find a place on it.

A large number of programmes have been locally developed, such as those for the computerisation of reports in histo and-cytopathological laboratories and for statistical methods and graphs not found in existing software, he said. The biggest achievement so far is the database built up on a large number of health-related indicators including those on socio-demographic

aspects, mortality and on fertility at the division of bio-statics and medical informatics, Delhi University.

This database, according to Dr Indrayan contains various rates and ratios for each State of India from 1971 onwards with break-ups on the basis of age, gender, and location gleaned from published Government reports.

Already the database, which is regularly updated, has become a useful resource for teaching and research, said Dr Indrayan who is professor at the division of biostatistics and medical informatics.

With access now available to databases of the "Medlars" family, medical students, teachers and other doctors can quickly stay updated with the latest developments around the world, in their particular field of interest.

When the division was set up nine years ago, the use of computers in medicine in this country was hardly realised, Dr Indrayan said, adding that the objective was simply to provide computational assistance for bio-statical methods in medical research.

These methods have a prominent place in medical Research, given the profound biological variations in the manifestations and

treatment response of disease, he said. They also helped members of the medical profession who are known for their dread of statistical methods because of the intricate and laborious calculations involved.

But the division truly came into its own when it started the Medline search facility in 1991 through a remote user facility obtained from the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

At present, the division is running a project to prepare a comprehensive health atlas of the country which would show the dynamics over the past two decades and also develop an index of health covering different aspects. A study of the trend in child mortality index has earned the division an award from the Indian Society for Medical Bio-statistics.

Other activities taken up by the division include computer-based lessons and diagnostic aids such as a package which shows a cardiac cycle through animations.

A cardiac cycle cannot be seen by medical students and this package depicts the contractions in the heart with opening and closing of valves and changes in ventricular, arterial and aortic pressures.