

Contributed by Marcy Holeton

# CLINICAL CONTENT WITH A GLOBAL FOCUS

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In recent years, medical publishers across a wide range of specialties have increasingly begun to offer clinical content with a global focus, through dedicated sections or special issues, and many have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from readers. The reasons for the domestic medical community's heightened interest are many, with a thirst for health-care innovations and an increasingly global environment among the most prominent.

Certain global communities have more lenient regulatory environments, generate significant technological advancements, and uncover revolutionary ways to treat patients. Clinicians are eager to learn about results achieved through treatments not currently available in the United States since positive results around the globe can facilitate faster domestic treatment approvals. Technological and treatment advancements are additional reasons that clinicians seek information about overseas medical communities. Leading overseas advancements often make it to the United States eventually, and the best clinicians simply want to be aware of these breakthroughs beforehand.

## GLOBAL BY NATURE

There is also a greater need to pay attention to the world at large on a day-to-day basis. We are bombarded daily with world news because of the media's growing attention to global issues. Furthermore, various nations are taking measures to increase their role in the global economy. Europe's currency conversion at the beginning of 1999 represents one isolated example of this trend. Rising domestic and global communications capabilities also are driving increased attention to, and interaction with, the world at large. The adoption of broadband Internet access alone is revolutionizing the type of information that people can access and share, and this continues to grow rapidly. According to data from the Small Business Association reported in March 2004, 42% of U.S. small businesses already have broadband access; eMarketer projects that by 2007 almost 50% of all U.S. households will have broadband access.

## THE OFFSHORE ANGLE

Perhaps overshadowing communication breakthroughs in the technology arena, though, is the escalating trend of business "offshoring." This practice has made a tremendous impact on the U.S. economy during the last 10 years. Although its merits are the subject of heated debates, no one can contest the fact that it has changed the way many U.S. industries conduct business in today's global economy.

Beyond manufacturing industries, offshoring did not have much impact on core business processes until 1993, when, according to a March 27, 2004, report in *The National Journal*,

American Express first moved some of its business processing operations to India. Five years later, General Electric began to outsource service jobs to offshore locations. Today, the practice is commonplace in such disciplines as information technology — coding, programming, remote management, operations; finance — transaction processing, administration, and contact roles; as well as call centers throughout many industries. Deloitte & Touche has predicted that \$356 billion in operating expenses in the global financial services industry alone will be relocated off shore within the next five years. That suggests that offshoring is here to stay.

Proponents of offshoring argue that it should be a widespread practice, touching many industries. They argue that the practice is cost effective, citing such statistics as salary disparities of more than 1,000%. What executive would immediately pass on an opportunity to accomplish the same tasks for less than 10% of the cost? While quality and quantity of services vary around the globe, offshoring has proven itself as a serious cost-saving measure in many industries. Some sectors of the healthcare industry already are offshoring certain tasks, such as IT functions and imaging analysis.

So it comes as no surprise that medical publishers who decide to provide readers with a regular or occasional glimpse into the global landscape of healthcare are receiving accolades for doing so. Clinicians clearly want to learn from technological, treatment, and other clinical advancements in countries around the world. Today, heightened global awareness is a reality in both pop culture and practical economics.

If these trends serve as a barometer for what the future holds, the medical community can expect to see continued growth in clinical publications offering globally focused content. As professionals worldwide take greater notice of one another, clinicians and healthcare executives will increasingly be exposed to innovation happening around the world.

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