National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID).
URL: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/

The National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID) is one of the divisions of the CDC. The mission of the NCID is to work in partnership with other national and international health agencies to promote prevention and control strategies for infectious diseases. The NCID also publishes the peer-reviewed journal Emerging Infectious Diseases, which can be viewed from the Web site. Additional components include an alphabetical listing of disease information, NCID electronic publications, reference information for international travel, links to other health agencies, and a keyword search section.

Web site content and organization. The major visual component of the NCID home page is a section called the “Hotzone”, which is a listing of new and hot topics. At the time I used the site, this section contained an announcement of an upcoming satellite conference on immunization and infectious disease, a thorough question and answer document on the West Nile-like viral infections in the eastern US, information on an upcoming international conference on emerging infectious diseases, and a press release on meningococcal diseases among college students.

Navigation from the home page is straightforward and is accomplished through buttons and key terms on both the top and side of the screen. The alphabetical “disease information” section contains >120 listings covering bacterial, parasitic, and viral infections. Although many of the infectious diseases covered are somewhat out of the usual scope of clinical chemistry, topics such as hepatitis, lyme disease, group A streptococcus, Helicobacter pylori, and influenza are included. The formats used to present information about selected diseases are not standardized; however, each selected disease page can be easily navigated to obtain the desired information.

Because hepatitis is prevalent and has many laboratory aspects, I selected the hepatitis page for review. Hepatitis types A–E each have an individual icon. Hepatitis A through C are formatted in a similar manner. There is a fact sheet (e.g., etiologic agent, incidence, sequelae, prevalence, transmission, risk groups, and prevention), a “frequently asked questions” section, and a “recommendations” section. Information about the hepatitis B vaccine is plentiful with an overall current bibliography. The hepatitis D and E sections are presented as sets of educational slides accompanied by technical notes. The slide sets can be downloaded as Powerpoint, WMF, or GIF files. I discovered that the same types of slides and technical notes are available for hepatitis A–C, but these unfortunately are not accessible from the “hepatitis home” page. They can be viewed via the “contents” icons within the hepatitis D or E sections, where the complete slide series is listed. Addition of a link within each of the hepatitis A–C sections would make access to these materials more user-friendly.

The NCID Web site itself does not cover HIV infection, but it does provide links to the Division of AIDS, STD, and TB Laboratory Research, as well as the National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention. Like the NCID, these are divisions of the parent CDC agency. Together, the Web sites provide comprehensive information about HIV.

Summary. This Web site provides access to useful information on a large number of infectious diseases. Access is not restricted, nor is any registration required. The free access to educational slide sets provides a nice tool for educational purposes. Should a disease or topic not be found directly within the NCID site, links to other agencies, including the many divisions of the CDC, may be used to provide access to a larger database of material.

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Correction
In the article by J.B. de Kok, T.J.M. Ruers, G.N.P. van Muijen, A. van Bokhoven, H.L. Willems, and D.W. Swinkels, entitled “Real-Time Quantification of Human Telomerase Reverse Transcriptase mRNA in Tumors and Healthy Tissues” (Clin Chem 2000;46:313–8), the values for colon tissue sample CT5 and esophagus tissue sample ON2 in Table 1 on page 315 are incorrect. The correct values are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell or tissue type</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Tumor/Healthy tissue</th>
<th>hTERT</th>
<th>rRNA</th>
<th>Normalized hTERT</th>
<th>Tumor in sample, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>CT5</td>
<td>Adenocarcinoma</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>21.27</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esophagus</td>
<td>ON2</td>
<td>Healthy tissue</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The error occurred in production.