WebWatch

Sweet Reams of Information

Low-carb diets have probably passed their peak of popularity, but the impact of carbohydrates is a lot bigger than any fad; just ask any diabetic. Helping to tell the story of sugars and their relatives is the abundantly informative MedBio page, created by Professor Emeritus Robert Horn in Oslo, Norway. At the site, visitors can select information from a long, tall column of carbohydrate-related topics. If you've ever wondered about the metabolism of starvation, the nuts and bolts of insulin secretion, or whether fructose is Mr. Goodsugar or Mr. Badsugar—you'll probably get answers at MedBio. A clear labor of love for Dr. Horn, MedBio is *the* place to go for answers about carbs. [www.medbio.info]

Do Know Harm

"What's the harm?" one might ask about any of dozens of seemingly innocuous topics, such as astrology, feng shui, or dream interpretation. From the pages of WhatsTheHarm.net, however, come some surprising answers. Talled on the site are over 350,000 people killed, more than 300,000 injured, and over \$2.75 billion in economic damages resulting from a lack of critical thinking about innocent-seeming things. The tales are enough to sober up almost anyone. They range from the laughable (lawsuits that happen to people who experience problems arising from their belief in ghosts) to human tragedies of misdiagnosis by new-age aficionados, leading to death or disfigurement. By making everyone aware of the damage done by quackery, WhatsTheHarm's designers just might make people think before they act. [www.whatstheharm.net]

Protist Markers

Trypanosoma brucei is not an organism to take lightly. The causative agent of sleeping sickness, this tiny, yet mighty protist is transmitted by the tsetse fly, which carries it in its gut and passes it on when taking blood from mammalian hosts. The results are not pretty. Knowledge is power, though, especially as it concerns health,

Doing Life

With an aim to fulfill renowned biologist Edward O. Wilson's dream of "an electronic page for each species of organism on Earth, available everywhere by single access on command," Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) is in the midst of assembling an impressive online database—with information on all 1.8 million species currently known to science. Aimed at both the public and research scientists, its Web pages will have general information that leads (via links) to more specialized info. Images, at least on the current pages, are abundant and colorful. Access to individual organism data is via a hyperlinked classification table, and for many of the organisms, multiple images are available. The EOL just may do for living systems what genomics and proteomics have done for molecular biology. [www.eol.org]

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making the TrypanoFAN (*Trypanosoma brucei* Functional Genomics Project) web site a source of strength. Aimed almost exclusively at researchers, TrypanoFAN focuses on using genomic information to create mutants to facilitate the study of uncharacterized genes. Search options are numerous and there is a large collection of RNAi information, as well. [<http://trypanofan.path.cam.ac.uk/trypanofan/main>]

Grand Kenyon Resource

Wikis are all the rage. These open, collaborative Web pages thrive thanks to user contributions. And they come in all sizes, shapes, and levels of quality. A welcome outpost on the landscape of wiki offerings is the student-based microbiology collection at Kenyon College. Here, Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) funding has enabled 13 student editors—under the guidance of a single managing editor—to assemble an impressive collection of pages about microbes. Access to information is mostly via a search engine, though class-linked pages are available with a single click. From Microbial World News to Microbial Mythology, the MicrobeWiki is a winner. [<http://microbewiki.kenyon.edu/index.php/MicrobeWiki>]

Nailing Fingers

Arguably, the protein domain with the most vivid, image-inducing name: zinc fingers are DNA-binding superfamilies of highly conserved sequences of ~30 amino acids found most commonly in transcription factors. At Jeff Mandell's Zinc Finger Tools page, users can combine their creativity for protein structure with knowledge of zinc fingers to design novel DNA-binding proteins targeted to desired sequences. Evolving such a protein in nature takes considerably more time than tweaking a few parameters. The site even provides guidelines to help users "play God" and create their final products. When it comes to "intelligently designed" proteins, Zinc Finger Tools is the place to be. [www.scripps.edu/mb/barbas/zfdesign/zfdesignhome.php]

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