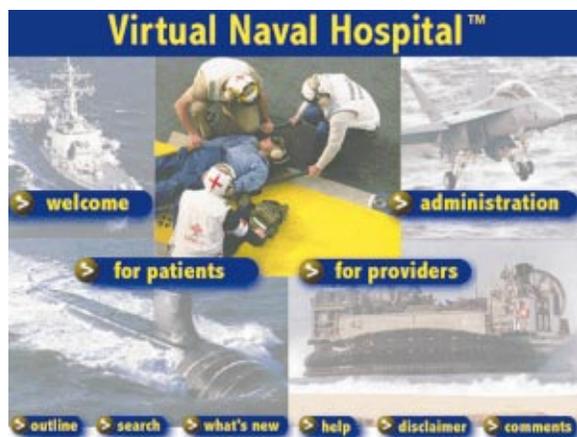


# Promoting, Protecting and Maintaining Health:

*The Virtual Naval Hospital proved to be a critical component during the recent conflicts in Southwest Asia and the Balkans and is considered one of the top 20 Web sites for medical professionals.*



*The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps currently support 324 ships, with 33 percent of those ships deployed at sea and another 20 percent undergoing training.*

## Virtual Naval Hospital

*This article summarizes material that appeared in the May 1999 issue of D-Lib Magazine ([www.dlib.org/dlib/may99/05dalessandro.html](http://www.dlib.org/dlib/may99/05dalessandro.html)).*

The mission of the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery is to support the combat readiness of the uniformed services and promote, protect and maintain the health of all those entrusted to their care – anytime, anywhere. With geographically isolated troops and health care providers, and limited access to authoritative medical information, the Navy needed an innovative solution to meet its mission. This mission, with its challenging set of circumstances, was met by the development of a digital Web-based library called the Virtual Naval Hospital™ (VNH). This digital library enables the distribution of medical information 24 hours a day from any location. The library, in operation since 1997, is heavily used, highly regarded and expanding in size.

The VNH ([www.vnh.org](http://www.vnh.org)) helps Navy health care providers and patients prevent disease and, when illness does occur, treat the sick or injured thereby maximizing mission readiness. Health care providers find authoritative information at the point-of-care, and patients find information to live healthy lives and prevent disease. The Virtual Naval Hospital proved critical during recent conflicts in Southwest Asia and the Balkans and is considered one of the top 20 Web sites for medical professionals.

The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps currently support 324 ships, with 33 percent of those ships deployed at sea and another 20 percent undergoing training. Sailors and Marines respond to international crisis on the average of once every four weeks. This makes it challenging to relay information quickly to communities ranging in size from 100 Sailors on a submarine to 6,000 Sailors and Marines on an aircraft carrier.

The VNH system minimizes variation of medical processes as the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery can ensure quality materials and the best information is available to the user.

The system was designed to be a virtual consultant and a user-focused system for the authors, contributors, medical providers and patients. The goal is to make Web-based navigation simple and user friendly by accessing the needed information in two or three clicks. This reduces the burden of carrying medical textbooks aboard ship or into the field. The users – patients and medical providers – can access this information from their homeport or while on deployment. They can access real-time reference material either through the Internet or via CD-ROM as most of the medical officers have laptops.

The VNH Team welcomes the advent of the Navy Marine Corps Intranet. Using NMCI as the basis for communications and information delivery should make the process of updating content and communicating with other health care providers more efficient and highly effective.

The Virtual Naval Hospital is a service of the U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and is presented by the Electric Differential Multimedia Laboratory, University of Iowa College of Medicine. 

*The original article was written by CAPT Richard S. Bakalar, Medical Corps, USN; Michael P. D'Alessandro, M.D., University of Iowa; LT Denis E. Ashley MC, U.S. Naval Reserve; Donna M. D'Alessandro, M.D., University of Iowa; and Mary J.C. Hendrix, Ph.D., University of Iowa.*