

Medicine Web alerting system is created

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U.S. researchers say they've developed a faster way to inform consumers online when a medicine is withdrawn from the marketplace.

The new approach involves NetWellness.org, a commercial-free, consumer health Web site produced by Ohio's three medical research universities: The University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University and Ohio State University.

"Information about drug withdrawals (from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration) may not reach patients quickly enough to prevent potentially dangerous side effects," said Dr. Peter Embi, lead author on the UC-based study. "Given the public's growing use of the Web for health information, it's important that Web-based consumer health content is kept up to date, particularly that involving withdrawal of a potentially harmful medicine.

"Our new approach," said Embi, an assistant professor of medicine, "allows just one person to modify affected Web pages in less than an hour and within just hours of an FDA drug withdrawal announcement."

Embi says he hopes the new method will encourage other Web sites carrying critical consumer health information to adopt a similar 24-hour response standard.

The procedure is detailed in the online edition of the Journal of Medical Internet Research.

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