

Web report

Medical algorithms and formulas

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Website The Medical Algorithm Project, Quanta Healthcare Solutions Inc.

URL <http://www.medal.org> (Spanish version: <http://www.medal.org.ar>)

Cost Free access and download without registration

Keywords algorithms, score

The Medical Algorithm Project is a database of international scores and formulae commonly used in various clinical specialties and research, including critical care. In addition to scores such as the Acute Physiology and Chronic Health Evaluation and Sequential Organ Failure Assessment, the calculators in other subspecialties may be of interest to intensivists (e.g. cardiology, transfusion medicine, nephrology). Topics are indexed by specialty and are downloadable as Microsoft® Excel datasheets, in which one can insert data to calculate a specific scale, value or equation. Despite the title, no visual algorithms for clinical decisions are listed, but the site is a useful tool, especially for intensive care unit research, in which monitoring of patients requires 'ready to use' systems to obtain scores easily. For each specialty (including critical care), the available resources are clearly shown, and a page of documentation provides significant explanation regarding the original formulae and bibliographic references for algorithms and equations. A search tool is also included to help one find specific terms of interest. The calculations are not performed online, and each section must be downloaded as an auto-extracting Excel file (macros must be enabled when the sheet is open), together with the .pdf file for the relative table of content.

The website is completely free, does not require registration, and provides instructions, feedback and references. The site is available in both English and Spanish languages. Quanta Healthcare Solutions Inc., which owns the site, states that they develop the individual files according to the original articles and textbooks; however, the content is not externally reviewed. Some references are listed in the home page. The latest version was released in October 2002 and contains approximately 3900 algorithms.

Best feature

The database is complete, well organized and easily searchable.

Worst feature

The Microsoft® Excel files are sometimes unstable, and the Visual Basic editing may require debugging (which is annoying). The presentation of the site could be improved.

Wish list

Peer-review may be necessary if clinicians are to use the results as a completely reliable, clinical supportive tool. The explanation provided for each algorithm/formula in the documentation page should be more complete and referenced. The increasing use of PDAs in medicine could take advantage of a mobile version for Palm® or Microsoft® Pocket PC.

Other links

<http://www.medal.org/links.html>

A full page of links to other similar calculators is also available on the site. Most of them refer to single algorithms and lack systematic topics.

Competing interests

None declared.