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Tool helps **doctors** diagnose

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URBANA – If you go to **the doctor** with an earache, you're probably going to be examined for an ear infection. And if your arm swells up after you fall down **the** stairs, you're probably going to be checked for a broken bone.

But what happens **when** you're seriously sick, and it's not so obvious what's wrong? In fact, your symptoms confound **the doctor**.

For some local **doctors**, **the** next step will be to **ask Isabel**.

Named after a child whose **doctors** couldn't diagnose her potentially life-threatening illness, **the Isabel** Diagnosis Reminder and Knowledge Mobilizing System is a Web-based tool newly available to many **doctors** in **the** area through Carle Foundation Hospital.

Doctors can access **the** system with a password from anywhere **they** have Internet access, enter **the** patient's symptoms and **the** system will provide them with a list of likely diagnoses and more information from medical journals and textbooks.

Carle hospital is leasing **the** system and making it available to all **doctors** who have privileges at **the** hospital, including those at Carle Clinic, many at Christie Clinic and some independent **doctors** in **the** area, Carle officials said.

The Isabel system doesn't replace most of **the** diagnostic work done by a **doctor**, but it **can** help **when the doctor** is **stumped**, according to Dr. Napoleon Knight, Carle's vice president of medical affairs and quality.

Don't **doctors** learn it all in medical school?

Knight said **doctors** are so busy these days – and have access to so much new information – that it's difficult to keep up with it all 100 percent of **the** time. And while there are many common ailments **they** see frequently, there are also times patients come in with uncommon symptoms **they** may have only read about back in medical school.

"Certainly you may have read about it, taken a test about it, but you have never seen a patient with that condition," Knight said.

That **can** be especially true in an area like Champaign-Urbana, where **the** presence of **the** University of Illinois has helped create an ethnically diverse community and there is so much international travel. Someone may bring a disease back from another country that a **doctor** has never seen, Knight said.

There's also a new potential for patients walking in with unfamiliar symptoms due to **the** threat of bioterrorism, he added.

"Anthrax for example," Knight said. "Most **doctors** have never seen anthrax in their lives."

Knight said he expects **the Isabel** system to be just another tool available to **doctors** in case **they** need it. There's also still **the** more conventional approach to those uncommon ailments – asking specialists to weigh in on **the** diagnosis, he said.

Provena Covenant Medical Center spokesman Gregory Alford said Covenant doesn't use **the Isabel** system, but does have plenty of print materials available for **doctors** to consult.

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