



nature publishing group



► **COVER:** 'A day at the races' by Manuel Enriquez Ramirez, inspired by the Perspectives on p141 and p147.



EZZIE HUTCHINSON



NICOLA MCCARTHY



SARAH SETON-ROGERS



GEMMA ALDERTON

Disseminating information on the web, as opposed to in print, is now very much the norm. Previously, we have highlighted how such information can be both beneficial and detrimental to cancer patients — access to accurate information can be life-saving, whereas inaccurate information can lead to false hope.

Previously, however, you were unlikely to be 'personally' introduced to life's less accurate cancer information sites, they would be just some of many presented after a search of the web. However, the rise in popularity of social networking sites (such as [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#)) is changing this. A brief trawl through some of these sites revealed interesting findings. Many forums or groups on these sites are involved in fundraising for cancer research or are enabling people to discuss personal insights into their disease. This is all to the good. However, 'disinformation' is widely available — postings that suggest alternative 'cures', including the use of dimethyl sulphoxide and the infamous dichloroacetate, are relatively easy to find. Somehow, such advice delivered through a networking site might appear more believable and is a potentially worrying trend.

Networking sites for scientists are also on the up ([Nature Network](#), for example). These have been designed to enable scientists to swap important findings on an informal basis, much like a 24 hour conference but without the bar and inevitable disco. And it seems clinicians are now in on the act, with the launch of [Dissect Medicine](#) and similar sites.

Although all these sites serve to facilitate the exchange of ideas, it would make more sense if we were all to exchange our ideas on the same site. Perhaps that way a greater understanding of all things cancer, for clinicians, researchers and, importantly, the general public, would become achievable.

EDITORIAL OFFICES

LONDON NatureReviews@nature.com
The Macmillan Building, 4 Crinan Street,
London N1 9XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7843 3620;
Fax: +44 (0)20 7843 3629

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MANAGEMENT OFFICES

LONDON nature@nature.com
The Macmillan Building,
4 Crinan Street,
London N1 9XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7833 4000;
Fax: +44 (0)20 7843 4596/7

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NEW YORK nature@natureny.com
Nature Publishing Group,
75 Varick Street,
9th floor, New York,
NY 10013-1917, USA
Tel: +1 212 726 9200;
Fax: +1 212 696 9006

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TOKYO nature@natureasia.com
Chiyoda Building 5F, 2-37-1 Ichigayatamachi,
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162-0843, Japan
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751; Fax: +81 3 3267 8746
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Tel/Fax: +91 11 2324 4186

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