

Letters to the Editor

Iatrogenic information overload

Dear Sir

Your untitled editorial on Information Diseases (*J. Information Sci.* 6 (1983) 101), *information need* and *information demand* is amusing if not entirely metaphoric. But you omitted the already well-defined disease *information overload*. You fail to state that more often than not, it is *iatrogenic* in origin. The unsuspecting client has a minor short-term symptom or need but is overdosed with exorbitant quantities of the wrong medicine. The general purpose antibiotic is prescribed when an aspirin tablet is sufficient. The information establishment is at fault because it still has not established appropriate standards of performance. Relevance, recall or precision seem to be the only

devices employed. Heaven forbid that we recommend a new system that finds just the right reference when tried and true methods will produce hundreds.

Yours sincerely

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P.S. I disapprove of untitled editorials and suggest you drop the practice. If it isn't worth including the title, then it isn't worth writing.

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