

Patients' insights offered on Net

By KENICHI IWASAKI

The Asahi Shimbun

A professor on Monday started a free Web-based database where users can easily find books about the experiences and struggles of patients and their families coping with such diseases as cancer.

Akihiko Takano, a professor at the National Institute of Informatics, said the database currently contains information on 700 books written by patients or family members.

He said that unlike other Web sites that offer "cures" for diseases or explain the most suitable hospital for treatment, his database provides practical information for users on how a disease affects the daily lives of those involved.

The "library of records on battles with diseases" Web site <<http://toubyoki.info/>> contains 12 broad categories, including cancer, brain diseases and mental illnesses.

These categories are broken down to 57 more specific diseases, including breast cancer and cerebral

apoplexy.

For each disease, a shelf of books appears, and a click on one of the titles brings up such information as the author's name, the name of the publisher and a summary.

Additional information includes comments by medical workers, the sex and age of the author, and if the writer is still alive.

Takano plans to increase the number of books in the database.

Although Takano set up the Web site, the cyber library was the brainchild of Yasushi Ishii, the leader of a group calling on libraries to set up sections exclusively for books that provide first-hand accounts on how patients and their families deal with serious diseases.

Ishii said patients want to read such stories, but the titles often do not specify the disease or indicate that the book was written by a patient.



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This Internet bookshelf allows users to quickly find information by patients on a particular disease.