

By MARK REYNOLDS

As a child, Paul Roumeliotis used to practise on his home-made drum set, trying to get just the right hit on a cymbal. Later, as a record producer, he found himself at the Juno awards because of his company's music hits. Now he finds himself dealing with the newest kind of "hits"—thousands on his Web site.

The Montreal pediatrician has a child health site which has won innumerable awards, uncoupled visitors, fans around the globe and acres of media attention.

The Web site, called Dr. Paul's Child Health and Wellness Info Site is at www.drpaul.com. According to Dr. Roumeliotis, his site is a natural extension of his musical career, and an integral part of his future plans.

"This has evolved from my vision and background."

Dr. Roumeliotis' vision is to achieve what few find in the medical field: fame. He trademarked the Dr. Paul concept in the 1980s and has produced a number of Dr. Paul videos, pamphlets and CD-ROMs.

"I want to have Dr. Paul branded as a recognized and credible source of child health information," says Dr. Roumeliotis.

The Web site is not the first step in this project, nor is it likely to be the last. It actually started 24 years ago, when Dr. Roumeliotis was eight years old. Despite his parents' desire for him to learn to play the accordion, he fell in love with the drums. Years of practice and playing with professional musicians eventually got Dr. Roumeliotis a number of gigs as a session drummer around Montreal.

Dr. Roumeliotis says that several bands asked him to go on tour with him, but he put his medical education at McGill ahead of his music career.

"I put my way through medical school as a rock drummer. I worked with local bands, weddings and dances and stuff. I formed my own band, and then bumped into a producer who used me as a session drummer, in the studio."

The studio experience proved to be something of a catalyst for Dr. Roumeliotis. He taught himself how to use a recording studio, and in 1985, installed one in his basement.

It has grown to include equipment like 72-track mixing board, a sequencer, keyboard, video editing hardware, a separate sound booth and his drum kit.



Dr. Paul Roumeliotis can create just about anything, from music to a health Web site in his basement studio.

Doc 'n' roll on the World Wide Web

Once a doctor, always a techie? Dr. Paul Roumeliotis practises medicine, plays the drums and produces music. Is there really time for a Child Health and Wellness Web site? Dr. Paul says yes

It was from this studio that Dr. Roumeliotis started his health communications business and his record company. The record company produced a number of artists. "It was quite neat—I produced a lot of records, I travelled a lot, I met a lot of nice people," he says. But he had to fold the record company in the early nineties. "It was very difficult to do all that and practise medicine at the same time. Yet I couldn't just practise medicine."

Dr. Roumeliotis continued to produce health education materials for doctors and patients, but his love of music never died.

He continues to play music for

the video and audio materials he produces for his health communications company, Autograph Communications, and for the Dr. Paul series of educational materials.

He plans to blend his original rock beginnings with his current occupation as well.

"I'm actually going to do a rock 'n' roll album with preventive health messages for teenagers."

Until then, he has plenty to keep him busy. His Web site has been covered in a number of newspapers, as well as by the CBC. All of them, he says, focused on the Web site, and ignored the context in which it came about.

says. "This does not replace physician-patient interaction."

Dr. Roumeliotis is excited about the potential that the Internet offers for physicians and patients. He points out that it can help doctors keep better tabs on patients, and help patients learn more about their illnesses on-line.

"I believe that the Web is an ideal opportunity to disseminate practical information. I believe that medical people—credible people—should be at the forefront of this."

Tracy Keleher of Rothesay, New Brunswick is a fan of the Dr. Paul site. "Parents have a lot of questions about their child's health," she says, adding that Dr. Roumeliotis' site is reassuring.

Keleher is the director of Canadian Parents Online, which she describes as a parenting community resource base.

It carries a weekly column by Dr. Paul and links to his site. Keleher says that the Dr. Paul site is a step above many other health resources on the Web.

"His site is more personal. He gets back to you very quickly. It's like seeing your own doctor," she says.

Dr. Roumeliotis doesn't just see his site as a resource for patients. He also believes that since patients are online getting information, doctors should be too, to help separate the wheat from the chaff.

"I urge physicians to get involved with what their patients are reading, and to be a resource for their patients who come to them with this stuff from online. Physicians need as much educational material as possible."

Dr. Roumeliotis hopes that doctors will use his site as a resource as well. It contains a printable archive that has a wealth of material on numerous subjects. It also has weekly columns, an interactive chat section, and a tip of the day for parents, all of which are archived on the site.

What's next for Dr. Roumeliotis? He is currently negotiating with "a very big company" that will help him launch the Health Web-Cast Network. This will broadcast live streaming video on the Internet. He plans to have a number of doctors in different specialties contribute their own shows to this project. It is expected to launch sometime this summer.

"I want to be a multimedia, modern, millennial Dr. Spock. That's my goal," he says.

Mark Reynolds is a writer in Montreal.

"I have been producing health information materials for over 15 years," he says. "The Web is just another format."

It is a format that is gaining increasing popularity with doctors, patients and people out to make a buck, he says.

"A lot of people are disguising Web sites as if they are disseminating information but they are in fact storefronts."

Dr. Roumeliotis says he is appalled at sites that offer a diagnosis for a fee. His site only offers general advice and guidance.

"My site is information-based—it's not based on the premise that I'm going to make a diagnosis," he