

American International Health Alliance 2003 Learning Resource Center Project Annual Report

Overall Goal:

To promote improved health care practices through increased access to, use of, and understanding of available knowledge resources.

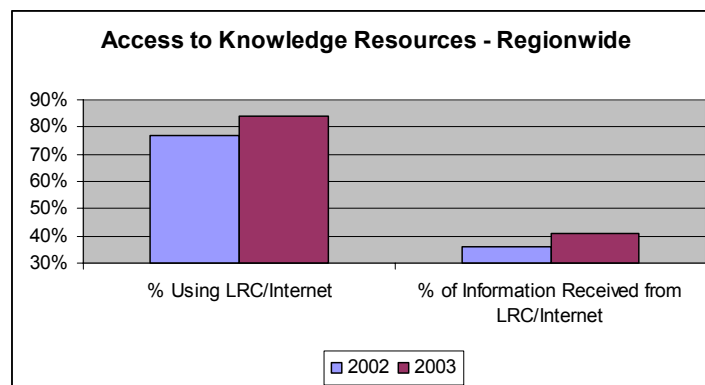
Objectives:

1. Increased access to up-to-date health care knowledge resources.
2. Increased promotion of evidence-based practice.
3. Demonstrated ability to sustain access to knowledge resources independent of AIHA funding.
4. Increased development and use of information and communication technology tools and applications.

FY03 Key Activities/Outputs/Outcomes:

Increased Access

- In 2003, 84 percent of health professionals at partner institutions are directly or indirectly accessing up-to-date health care research and information using the Internet and other computer-based technologies. This represents an increase from 77 percent in 2002 and from less than 10 percent before the partnership program began. Partnership health professionals surveyed by AIHA now receive 41 percent of their information from computer-based sources, including the Internet, again up from a negligible percentage prior to the partnership program.



Promotion of Evidence-based Practice

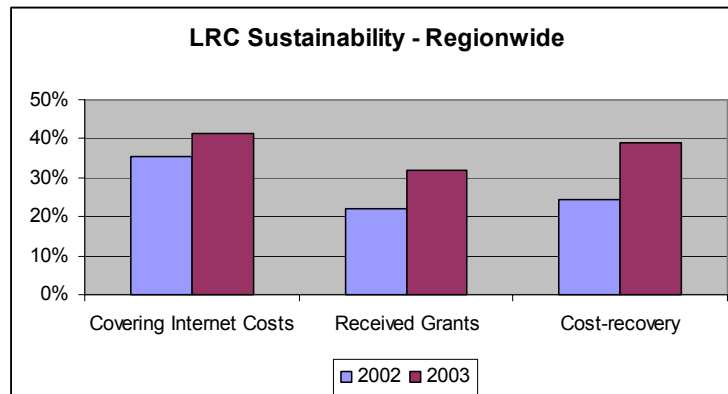
- Through the LRC program, AIHA has consistently strived to promote the ideas and principles of evidence-based practice (EBP) at both the individual practitioner and the broader institutional level. Because of the broad range of institutions involved in the partnership program and variations in practice among regional and national health administrations, these promotion efforts have largely been non-prescriptive, i.e., rather than advocating particular institutional quality assurance processes, AIHA has tried to instill the EBP philosophy into existing processes and practices. AIHA measures the success of these efforts by determining whether staff at partner institutions are able to demonstrate their understanding of EBP methodologies and whether quality review processes that embody these principles exist or are being developed within the institutions.
- Sixty-nine (56 percent) of the 123 partnership institutions with functioning LRCs are successfully demonstrating the use of evidence-based methodologies in reviewing standards of clinical and educational practice at their institutions. As part of the partnership program, staff from each LRC work with other health professionals at the partnership institution to review two specific clinical or educational practices per year. Upon receiving these written reviews, AIHA staff work with partners to help them evaluate the search strategy and their critical appraisal of the existing research. Through this process, partners gain a fuller understanding of the principles of evidence-

based practice and how to apply its principles in practice. (Note: at the time of this writing, many of these reviews are still in the process of being submitted and therefore are not included in the statistical summary.)

- In 2003, AIHA conducted its first Evidence-based Practice Survey, asking partners to describe their internal processes for reviewing and evaluating current practice standards. The survey results show that 17% of partner institutions currently have established regular and ongoing processes for widely and routinely evaluating standards using the latest available evidence. While a much larger percentage of partners have established review processes of various kinds, many of these were not considered to be sufficiently routine or did not adequately utilize the latest available research evidence. Based on further feedback and an EBP distance education program to be provided in FY04, AIHA expects this indicator to increase gradually over time.

Sustainability

- AIHA partners have continued to make progress in their efforts to establish sustainable Internet access for staff at their institutions. In 2003, 41 percent of partner institutions were maintaining Internet connectivity without AIHA support, up from 35 percent in 2002. In addition, 32 percent have at some point during the course of the project received grants supporting Internet connectivity or other resources and infrastructure that enhance the capabilities of the LRC, up from 22 percent in 2002. Finally, 39 percent of the LRCs (up from 25 percent in 2002) are partially recovering some maintenance costs by, for example, renting equipment and facilities and charging external clients for information/clerical services. It is the underlying philosophy of the LRC project that AIHA partners will come to recognize and value the benefits of providing information access to staff and will begin to cover these costs on their own as soon as the economic environment allows. In the meantime, grant funding and modest cost recovery help to instill the principles of self-sustainability.



ICT Tools and Applications

- LRCs have planted a variety of “seeds” within partner institutions, helping to foster the growth of IT infrastructure, improved management information systems, and telemedicine capabilities. In 2003, the number of partner institutions that have developed databases (including electronic medical records, financial/accounting systems, and/or bibliographic/research databases) rose from 61 to 65 percent. Those that have installed local area networks rose from 64 to 71 percent. Eighty-eight percent of all partner institutions have developed their own Web sites and 80 percent actively engage in Internet-based teleconsultations to enhance patient care.

