

LRC Highlights
October – December 2002

AIHA information coordinators recently reported the following activities and accomplishments in their monthly activity reports for the Learning Resource Center (LRC) project.

If you would like more information about any of these highlights, please contact the information coordinator at the partner institution. The e-mail addresses of all AIHA partnership information coordinators are available on AIHA's Web site at: www.aiha.com

For more information about AIHA's Learning Resource Center project, please see AIHA's web site at www.aiha.com/english/programs/lrc/ or contact Mark Storey, AIHA Program Officer for Information and Communication Technology, at mstorey@igc.org.

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1. Applications of Evidence-Based Practice

[Note: In order to promote the principles of evidence-based practice, all LRCs are required to regularly conduct what is termed a “Practice Standard Review” (PSR) in which they evaluate the available evidence for a particular clinical intervention, health policy, or educational method. For more information on PSRs, please see: www.aiha.com/english/programs/lrc/psr/index.cfm]

Based on the results of a Practice Standard Review, the staff of the Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, have changed their treatment of arterial hypertension for patients with diabetes. The review of current literature made staff question the effectiveness of diuretics and beta-blockers for the treatment of hypertension in diabetes patients. Following this assessment, the staff involved in conducting the review updated their treatment protocols and disseminated new standards to all primary care physicians at the polyclinic. The new approach has already yielded positive results in a few patient cases.

Using Ovid, Medline and other LRC resources, physicians at the Republican Center for Emergency Medicine in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, are researching rational methods for prescription, diagnostics and treatment to improve clinical and economic outcomes. A recent review of the standard intensive therapy department policy, which requires a full set of lab tests for every patient determined this policy to be unnecessary and costly. They concluded that lab tests are essential only for those indicators that are relevant to the performed procedure. For example, for a patient with chronic kidney problems, only lab tests for creatine, urea, urine gravity and potassium levels in blood will show the effectiveness of treatment. In another review, the physicians studying head trauma determined that rational doses of diuretics and magnesium sulfate can be more effective than expensive plasma components. Based on these reviews, the institution is developing new protocols that would help improve both patient outcomes and economic indicators.

Within the framework of the quality improvement activities that have been established at the Main Family Medicine Center in Gjilan, Kosovo, the information coordinator suggested the creation of a committee to review practice standards. This process would facilitate the use of evidence-based methodologies through regular evaluation of current practices. The information coordinator is currently preparing an action plan and a member list for the new committee.

A group of physicians at Polyclinic #5 in L'viv, Ukraine, has recently completed a literature review on the use of Clarithromycin +, an antibiotic for the treatment of tonsillitis. They researched and analyzed information about drug indications, side effects, length of treatment, and dosage. Based on the results of this review, the physicians also tested the new drug on a group of patients aged 40-75 suffering from chronic tonsillitis. Using this data, the physicians created a new protocol for the polyclinic, recommending Clarithromycin + for the treatment of tonsillitis.

To determine proper antibiotic treatment for a patient with acute cystitis, the LRC staff together with a urologist from Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, used the Internet, Ovid and Cochrane databases to search for the latest evidence. Based on this research and analysis, they decided to develop a protocol for the treatment of acute cystitis at the polyclinic. The results of this process were discussed at a physician meeting, and everyone agreed to implement the new standard. The patient, having received the new antibiotic treatment, quickly recovered.

Following up on an information request on the use of aerosolized antibiotics for the treatment of sinusitis, the LRC at the Main Family Medicine Center in Gjilan, Kosovo, found resources that made physicians reevaluate their practice. The reviews in Cochrane and Ovid databases found not only a lack of evidence supporting this method, but also showed that the use of aerosolized antibiotics for sinusitis can be harmful by inducing bacterial resistance. This data has discouraged the family physicians from applying this treatment method in their daily practice.

A group of physicians at Vladivostok Hospital #2 in Russia, has been interested in determining the effects of involving clients (patients) in the delivery and evaluation of mental health services. The physicians' literature search yielded five randomized control trials and seven other comparative studies. Half of these studies considered involving clients in managing cases. This evidence supports the notion that patient involvement contributes to positive changes in the provision of services across a range of different settings, validating the ongoing healthcare delivery changes at the hospital.

During this quarter, AIHA provided all LRCs in the NIS with the newly published *Clinical Evidence* annual reference guide in Russian, which provides the best available evidence across several different medical fields. Many LRCs have already shared the guide findings with their colleagues in an effort to reevaluate and improve healthcare practices. For example, the LRC staff at the Uzhgorod Oblast Hospital in Ukraine have disseminated information on stroke treatment to the members of the regional neuropathology society. Similarly, the information coordinator at the Emergency Medicine Center in Kiev, Ukraine, circulated the review on acute renal failure to staff physicians and researchers working in this field. In another example, after reading the section on osteoporosis, the staff of the cardiology department at the Institute of Obstetrics and Pediatrics in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, became more cautious about the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. They hope that this approach will reduce the occurrence of gastroduodenal problems for patients suffering from osteoporosis.

2. LRC Outreach Into the Community

The National Information Learning Center (NILC) in Tbilisi, Georgia, has launched a new quarterly journal, *Contemporary Medicine*, which covers the fields of evidence-based practice and clinical practice guidelines. Published in Georgian with English abstracts, *Contemporary Medicine* will use western journals and databases as the main source of articles. The first issue of *Contemporary Medicine* featured clinical practice guidelines on atrial fibrillation and chronic heart failure. The new journal is available in print and electronically at www.nilc.org.ge/nilc/web-pages/contemporary_medicine.htm.

The LRC staff at the Pereyaslavka Rayon Hospital in Khabarovsk region, Russia, have been developing a library of Russian-language materials from the Internet on a variety of health topics. In addition to subject-specific binders that contain printed articles and other resources available for hospital staff, the LRC also has an electronic collection of these resources. The electronic version of the library can be copied onto floppy disks or CD-ROMs for staff working in other locations. Recently, such a CD with materials on primary care, surgery, emergency medical services, pediatrics, pulmonology and dermatology was sent to a feldsher working in the remote town of Kruglikovo. The LRC staff plan to create similar CDs for other regional healthcare institutions, which need health information but lack finances and infrastructure to establish Internet access.

The LRC staff at the Republican Clinical Hospital in Baku, Azerbaijan, have been assisting the hospital nursing association in its continuing medical education activities. To determine training needs, LRC staff prepared questionnaires using resources sent by e-mail by their Houston partners. After the main training subjects were identified, they searched nursing related Web sites to find appropriate training materials. LRC staff also helped the instructors prepare Power Point presentations and provided equipment and room facilities for nurse trainings. Currently, they are working on developing tests to assess retention levels after the training courses.

The Open Medical Club of Eastern Slovakia, which was initiated by the information coordinator from the Kosice Faculty Hospital, has been collaborating with the Slovak Ministry of Health to assist in the development of healthcare reforms. Together with the reform leaders, club members are currently preparing two seminars on evidence-based practice and healthcare reform to be held in Bratislava and Kosice. Additionally, a visiting physician from Montana, USA, will present a comparative analysis between the US and Slovak experiences in healthcare system organization, monitoring and evaluation, centralization of care, public and private healthcare, and the role of insurance companies.

In an effort to educate physicians and nurses on the ethical, legal and prevention aspects of HIV infection, the LRC staff at the Schuche Rayon Hospital in Kurgan region, Russia, have organized a training session for the staff of the obstetrics department. Using materials from Russian-language HIV/AIDS Web sites (www.infosite.aids.ru and aids.ru), the training focused on communication between medical staff and HIV-infected patients, legal requirements and prevention of occupational exposure during delivery.

Working with chief physicians of the maternity and city hospitals in Lezha, Albania, the LRC staff at the Primary Healthcare Directorate has been disseminating information resources on pregnancy, cancer and domestic violence. These materials have generated a lot of interest among physicians, some of whom have been visiting the LRC to obtain more information. Additionally, the information coordinator made a presentation on the treatment of hypertension during pregnancy at the Lezha City Hospital's monthly family physician meeting. Based on the positive response of family physicians, these monthly presentations will continue, highlighting the latest evidence and resources on the physicians' topics of interest.

In November, the LRC staff at the Emergency Medical Services Training Center (EMS TC) in Tbilisi, Georgia, received an information request from the National Medical Center on artificial lung ventilation.

The results of the search yielded so many valuable materials that in addition to satisfying the request, the staff of the EMS Training Center decided to develop a special training course on artificial ventilation.

The LRC staff from the Republican Clinical Hospital in Baku, Azerbaijan, conducted a training session for several physicians and satellite LRC staff at the Sabirabad Regional Hospital, which primarily serves the refugee population. The training focused on medical information searching strategies and the use of evidence-based practice resources. The participants also learned how to design teleconsultation requests.

3. LRCs as Health Promotion Centers

The LRC staff at the Central Rayon Hospital in Korsakov, Russia, have participated in two health fairs organized in small nearby towns. They prepared two brochures on health promotion for diabetes patients and a booklet on prevention of skin diseases. LRC staff also used this opportunity to explain to health fair visitors the advantages of Internet searching and designed a poster stand about LRC capabilities and resources. Locally, LRC staff regularly prepare an insert called “Charity and Health” for the newspaper, *Sunrise*. The latest inserts highlighted information on Hepatitis B, flu and stroke prevention, depression symptoms, and prevention and treatment of scoliosis among children.

As part of its School of Hypertension program, the Center for Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Diseases at City Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, organized two educational sessions for patients with arterial hypertension. In addition to prevention, treatment and disease management information, the participants learned about additional resources for patients available on the Internet. Each participant also took home an LRC brochure, which highlights center capabilities and resources available to patients and physicians.

The LRC at the Pereyaslavka Rayon Hospital in Khabarovsk region, Russia, has been supplying a local youth club with a variety of educational resources on health promotion. Using this information, adolescents have been learning about HIV/AIDS prevention, sexually transmitted diseases, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health issues. The LRC also provided brochures on influenza, diphtheria and hypertension to the local secondary school.

4. Promoting LRC / Partner Sustainability

The Association of Educational Programs in Health Administration in Russia has received a one-year grant from the United Kingdom to develop an undergraduate curriculum on health management. Currently, 35 qualified specialists in nine Russian regions are working on developing the program, which will be recommended to the Ministry of Health as a new standard.

The Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at the Comenius University in Martin, Slovakia, has been included in the Global Youth Tobacco Survey coordinated by WHO and CDC. Because the staff have been using LRC resources for research, some funds from the grant budget will be used for equipment upgrades. In other news, faculty staff are planning to publish a recently conducted review of smoking data validity in various population groups.

As part of a larger project, the Medical Information and Analysis Center in Samara, Russia, has received a grant from the Eurasia Foundation to create a medical portal for health professionals and health consumers in Russia.

The LRC at the Institute of Obstetrics and Pediatrics in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, has received a computer from the Soros Foundation for a new information resource center at the Institute's maternity hospital. To save costs and maximize the use of the existing Internet connection, the maternity hospital staff will work on-line in the off hours, between 5 pm and 7 am. Institute staff have also capitalized on other grant opportunities available from international donors. Six physicians and three assistant directors received training on the Internet, Web design, MS Excel and Power Point from IREX and the Manas Project.

In partnership with the Women's Wellness Center, the Faculty of Electronics at the Technical University in Iasi, Romania, has received a grant from the National University Research Council to develop a Web-based health information system. The project, entitled "Access. Communication. Information. – A Socio-Medical Portal," will focus on the provision of health information for consumers and physicians.

5. Application of Information Technology, Telemedicine, and Databases

The Kyrgyz State Medical Academy (KGMA) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, is developing a corporate information network, which will connect all academy institutes and medical facilities into one system. Due to the lack of funds to fully computerize all academy divisions, each location plans to establish its own mini-LRC, equipped with 5 computers, a printer and a scanner. At this stage, four satellite LRCs at the Medical Center and at the Institutes of Pharmacy, Dentistry and Nursing have been set up, with three more centers to be established in the near future. The main LRC staff together with the US partners plan to conduct training on MS Word, Excel, Power Point and Photoshop for new LRC staff, which will be responsible for teaching these skills to other staff at their locations. In addition to the LRCs, the corporate network also includes the administrative department, the reading room and the new multimedia library, which has 15 computers and a growing collection of CD-ROMs and other resources. To accommodate the increasing number of network users, the academy is currently testing a 128 Mb channel, with plans to move to a fiber optic connection in 2004 as part of a NATO-funded republican education network.

6. Best Practices/Recommendations for LRC Operations

To attract more users and engage students in learning, the LRC staff at the Medicine and Pharmacy University in Chisinau, Moldova, have been organizing highly popular weekly trivia contests. University students, nurses and upper-level school and lyceum students try to answer medical and paramedical questions, which are published on the university Web site and local area network.

To help with LRC tasks and network management activities, the information coordinator at the Erebuni Medical Center in Yerevan, Armenia, has decided to recruit senior-year students from the local medical college. According to the plan, one or two students would be assigned to each LRC staff person to help with everyday activities, and by the end of the school year, the hospital would have several trained college graduates as potential employees. To realize this plan, the information coordinator made an announcement at the college and received 128 requests with personal letters and grade report information. After a careful review, eight students were selected, four of which have stayed on to continue the training process at the LRC.