

LRC Highlights
January – March 2004

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.

LRC Highlights are meant to demonstrate the impact of access to health information, not the effectiveness or otherwise of different treatments. The content is anecdotal and is **not** intended as a source of reliable health information in itself. Healthcare providers are advised not to change practice on the basis of anecdotal material. Healthcare providers should consult evidence-based textbooks, guidelines and systematic reviews before making any changes in practice.

For more information about AIHA's Learning Resource Center project, please see AIHA's Web site at www.aiha.com/index.jsp?sid=1&id=1280&pid=4739 or contact Mark Storey, AIHA Program Officer for Information and Communication Technology, at mstorey@igc.org.

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Application of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

[Note: In order to promote the principles of evidence-based practice, all LRCs are required to regularly conduct "Practice Standard Reviews" (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: <http://www.aiha.com/index.jsp?sid=1&id=7992&pid=7976>]

Using information from the Cochrane Library and the Internet, the Information Coordinator and an otolaryngologist from Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, conducted a Practice Standard Review (PSR) on the treatment of acute maxillary sinusitis. Based on the analysis of the available evidence, the physicians recommended a reevaluation of standard treatment methods for acute maxillary sinusitis for the entire polyclinic. This issue was raised because of a slightly unusual case, which required a rational decision for a patient with this condition who was allergic to several types of antibiotics. The patient was treated using physical, homeopathic, and topical therapy, which resulted in complete recovery without the use of antibiotics. Following this case, and based on the results of a literature review, physicians concluded that antibiotic therapy has no effect on the treatment of acute maxillary sinusitis for ambulatory patients. The use of antibiotics for more complicated cases requires further study.

After completing two Practice Standard Reviews on Chondroprotective Drugs in osteoarthritis therapy and the use of hydroxyethyl starch for transfusion therapy during obstetrical hemorrhage, the LRC staff at the Schuche Rayon Hospital in Kurgan region, Russia, began active dissemination and outreach activities

to help implement the new treatment protocols. They developed memory aides for district home care physicians with algorithms for diagnosis and treatment of osteoarthritis, and have also made several presentations at staff meetings. In addition to changes at the physician level, the administration agreed to purchase hydroxyethyl starch for emergency therapy during obstetric bleedings.

A group of physicians at the Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center (formerly Emergency Medical Scientific Center) in Yerevan, Armenia, spent several months searching for and analyzing information on the prevention of cardiac arrhythmia after pneumectomy. They were particularly interested in effective and proven methods of anesthesia. After review and analysis of evidence from different countries, they chose and began to apply a new method of anesthesia. Since then, physicians have observed reduced rates of cardiac arrhythmia following lung reduction surgery.

Based on information from the Cochrane Library, the register of medical interventions at the Stavropol Krai Clinical Hospital in Russia was updated to indicate that arthroscopic procedures were considered “proven effective.” A group of staff prepared a report “Arthroscopy: A review of Evidence,” which was presented and discussed during a department head meeting. The report also discussed the advantages—a shorter operating procedure, smaller cuts, reduced rates of post-surgical complications, lack of secondary pathology, and reduced costs—as well as drawbacks of the procedure: dependency on surgeon’s ability, maneuverability through a small cut, and cost of equipment. Following this review, the hospital administration posed the task of conducting similar evidence reviews for all surgical procedures used at the hospital.

With the support of the LRC, an EBM Steering Committee was established at the Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education in Prague, Czech Republic, with the goal to motivate educators to introduce the concepts of evidence-based practice into postgraduate specialist training. The Committee consists of the Deputy Director of Pedagogy, teaching methodology department staff and medical librarians (LRC staff). The impetus for this new direction was administration’s recognition of the need for regular improvements in the quality of care. As part of the Committee’s outreach efforts, in February 2004 its members conducted a seminar for Institute faculty on “EBM Principles in Postgraduate Education.”

Using an evidence-based algorithm for perioperative antibiotic prophylaxis developed by the staff of the Infection Control Training Center (ICTC) at the Mechnikov Medical Academy in St. Petersburg, Russia, a local hospital successfully replaced its non-rational antibiotic usage and prevention procedures. The preliminary assessment of the results demonstrated the medical and economic effectiveness of the new guideline.

The LRC staff at the National Center for Disease Control in Tbilisi, Georgia, helped in the development of a new guideline on hand hygiene for Georgian healthcare facilities by researching evidence-based studies.

Using Medline and other resources found on the Internet, physicians at Children’s Hospital #4 in Minsk, Belarus, developed recommendations for disinfection of endoscopic equipment. Additionally, the physicians prepared algorithms for the examination and treatment of children with chronic hives.

LRC Outreach Into the Community

After attending an international workshop on the AGREE Instrument—a tool used for appraisal of clinical practice guidelines—the LRC staff at the Uzhgorod Oblast Hospital in Ukraine conducted their own training seminar for local and regional physicians. More than 50 people from the hospital and other

healthcare institutions in the Uzhgorod region attended the workshop where they learned about the appraisal process and received a Russian-language version of the AGREE Instrument.

The LRC Staff at the Medical-Sanitary Unit #15 in Snezhinsk, Russia, have been collaborating with the faculty of physiology and clinical pharmacology departments at the Chelyabinsk State Medical Academy. The LRC lent the Academy its copies of the Cochrane Library on CD-ROM for which the Information Coordinator provided training, focusing on search and analysis of systematic reviews. Following this session, the two sides agreed to continue collaboration and information exchange.

Every month, the LRC staff at the Perinatal Center in L'viv, Ukraine, prepare medical information reports on topics suggested by physicians. Such reports usually cover standard treatment approaches, news, interesting facts, and literature reviews found on-line. Last month, the LRC staff prepared a report on breast diseases. Obstetricians and gynecologists at the Perinatal Center received information about benign breast disorders, hyperplasia, hormonal and non-hormonal treatment methods of benign breast disorders, and oncological aspects of breast diseases.

The Web site of the Occupational Medicine Hospital in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (<http://www.occmed.ro/>), now hosts the information for the upcoming XII National Congress on Occupational Medicine, which will take place in September 2004 in Cluj-Napoca. The Web site provides downloadable registration forms, an invitation letter, a template for abstract submission and general information about the Congress. Additionally, the LRC Information Coordinator created on-line newsgroups for Congress participants to begin discussions prior to the event.

LRCs as Health Promotion Centers

Every week the physicians at the Town Health Center in Lezha, Albania, organize meetings for pregnant women, teenagers and mothers with infants to discuss healthcare practices and preventive procedures that could be used at home. The LRC provides printouts and other educational materials for these meetings. For the last meeting, the Information Coordinator prepared resources on family planning, which were distributed in conjunction with a presentation by a physician from the family planning center.

Twice a month the staff of the American-Armenian Wellness Center in Yerevan conduct educational sessions for local women on issues related to pre- and post-menstrual conditions. During these sessions women receive brochures and other information on healthy lifestyle, domestic violence, screenings, and sexual health. They also get a listing of Web sites where they can find additional information on these and other topics.

Promoting LRC / Partner Sustainability

In collaboration with a regional nonprofit organization "Charity and Health," the Korsakov Central Rayon Hospital on Sakhalin Island, Russia, applied for a grant from the Institute for Sustainable Communities, a program of "Civil Society Initiatives in the Far East," sponsored by USAID. The grant, entitled "Don't Die from Ignorance," involves the development of a mobile dermatology and venereology unit, which would travel throughout the region to provide anonymous STI testing, consultations and other support to local youth and young adults. Project organizers plan to solicit volunteers among students to work with risk groups and disseminate information resources on STIs among their peers. The grant also anticipates public awareness and prevention campaigns, screenings and other events. The LRC staff, in addition to assistance with grant proposal writing, plan to participate in the project by developing pamphlets, posters, information packets and other educational materials.

As of March 1, 2004, the LRC at the Stavropol Krai Clinical Hospital in Russia officially became incorporated into the Department of Medical Information Technologies as an Education and Information Center. The department received approval for an additional full-time physician/researcher position and a part-time medical librarian. Currently, the LRC staff are reviewing on-line information on fundraising, which they hope to use to support LRC- and hospital-wide projects. In support of these initiatives, the chief physician agreed to cover fundraising training for one of the LRC staff using hospital funds. The Department of Medical Information Technologies, which also includes technical and telecommunication units, recently received funding from the Ministry of Health of Stavropol Region to purchase teleconsultation equipment for the hospital and three mini-teleconsultation centers in the region. This equipment has already been purchased and installed.

The Information Coordinator at the Mirkasimov Republican Clinical Hospital in Baku, Azerbaijan, organized a training session for hospital staff and colleagues from the Family Medicine Center and Republican Children's Hospital on grant proposal writing. The participants used materials from AIHA training workshops and discussed examples of grant activities involving the LRC, the Mirkasimov Hospital and other organizations. As a result of these discussions, the parties agreed to develop joint grant proposals for educational and health promotion projects.

The Kyrgyz Scientific and Research Institute of Obstetrics and Pediatrics in Bishkek, in collaboration with similar organizations in other countries, has applied for a conference grant from INTAS, an independent International Association formed by the European Community acting to promote the scientific potential of the NIS countries through East-West Scientific co-operation. Grant applicants plan to organize a strategic seminar of INTAS member countries to share knowledge and develop collaborative strategies. The seminar would be organized in conjunction with the International Conference on Obstetrics and Gynecology, which is scheduled to take place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in the Fall of 2004.

The LRC staff at the Gudushauri National Medical Center in Tbilisi, Georgia, have developed curricula materials for a two-week training course on basic technical skills. The two-week course covers Basic Computer Usage/Windows, Internet/Web Browsing and Searching, MEDLINE and General Medical Searching, E-mail, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint. These courses are offered to the hospital staff free of charge, but the LRC is considering charging a fee for outside users. Additionally, the EBP Specialist, in collaboration with the New Technologies Implementation group designed a training course on evidence-based practice. The curriculum has been sent to the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs for accreditation.

The Medical Information and Analysis Center (MIAC) in Samara, Russia, received a grant from the Social and Cultural Projects Fair "Nizhny Novgorod 2003" funded by the Volga Region Federal District. The grant, in the amount of 822,000 rubles (approximately \$29,000), involves the development of a regional information center and an interregional partnership for the prevention of drug abuse and socially dangerous disorders.

Application of Information Technology, Telemedicine, and Databases

To help determine the best treatment choice for a four-year-old girl with varicose veins, the Information Coordinator at the Kyrgyz State Medical Academy Medical Center in Bishkek sent a consultation request via several electronic mailing lists, including the LRC Network mailing list. LRC staff from Chisinau, Moldova (Republican Clinical Hospital), Yerevan, Armenia (Grigor Lusavorich Medical Center), and Stavropol, Russia (Krai Clinical Hospital) responded to the teleconsultation request. Additionally, a family physician from Donetsk, Ukraine, sent suggestions for recommended treatment. Cumulatively, the physicians recommended phlebography, surgery and discontinuation of the expensive Fibro-vein drug.

As part of postgraduate medical education, physicians from the anesthesiology, resuscitation and intensive therapy departments at the Mirkasimov Republican Clinical Hospital in Baku, Azerbaijan, participated in an on-line testing program offered by the RusMedical Group (www.rusmg.ru). These tests are based on qualification requirements for anesthesiology/resuscitation specialists established by the Russian Ministry of Health. The physicians assigned special times to come to the LRC to take the Web-based tests. Following the tests, they organized group sessions to discuss wrong answers. This testing and discussion approach was later used by neuropathologists and reflex therapists who tested their knowledge using the InfaMed Web site (www.infamed.com).

Using automatic testing software “Assistant 2,” the LRC staff at the Medical-Sanitary Unit #15 in Snezhinsk, Russia, prepared an exam on blood transfusion for the Unit physicians. The test was conducted during the second week of February 2004. Additionally, the LRC library, which is being converted into HTML format and posted on the local area network, offers a set of educational resources and guidelines on blood transfusion.