

LRC Highlight May 1998

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

ON-LINE CONSULTATIONS

Physicians at Kiev Children's Hospital No. 2 were treating an 8-year-old patient with yellow spots in his eyes, which the physicians diagnosed as retinitis pigmentosa. Because the condition is rare and physicians were unsure of how best to treat the patient, they asked the information coordinator, Larisa Konovalova, to send an e-mail request along with the case history to the AIHA partnership mailing list in order to solicit advice. Larisa received responses from Dr. William Schwartz, partnership coordinator for the Philadelphia-Kiev partnership, and an ophthalmologist at the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania. In addition, several information coordinators from other partnerships provided references and contact information for ophthalmology specialists. Based on the advice they received, the Kiev physicians decided to wait for additional signs of the disease while continuing to attentively examine the patient. The patient is currently doing fine. (May 1998)

When a 2-and-a-half year old child in Almaty was diagnosed with congenital hydrocephalus, Marashallas Syndrome and infantile cerebral paralysis, physicians at First Aid Hospital were not sure what course of treatment to pursue. With the help of the hospital's information coordinator, Oksana Kirichenko, the physicians sent a request to other AIHA partners to ask for contact information for medical centers in the US and Europe that have had a lot of experience with these conditions. Oksana received a reply from AIHA partners in Tirana, Albania. Miranda Zhegu, information coordinator at the University Hospital Center "Mother Theresa" in Tirana sent contact information for a rehabilitation hospital in Rome, Italy. The patient's parents were reluctant, however, to send the child so far away, so Oksana continued her search and found the Web site of the Children's Telemedicine Center (<http://www.telemednet.ru>). The director of this center, O. Y. Popov, sent Oksana several addresses, including that of the Regional Clinical Children's Hospital in Moscow, where the child has been sent and is now receiving treatment.

Physicians at Lviv Oblast Perinatal Center are using e-mail regularly to consult with their partners at Millard Fillmore Hospitals in Buffalo, New York on difficult cases. In April, Dr. Igor Vernikovski was treating a pregnant woman in her third trimester who had a scar on her uterus and was suffering from dermatosis and hepatitis C. In addition, the fetus was not in the proper position for birth. Dr. Vernikovski had questions about the course of treatment he should follow--how to deliver the child, how the infectious diseases would impact the child, and whether or not the mother should breast feed the child after its birth--so he turned to his colleagues at Millard Fillmore Hospital in Buffalo, New York. Following the advice of Dr. Donald Schmidt, Dr. Vernikovski waited to allow the hepatitis episode to abate and then eventually performed a C-section and delivered a healthy child weighing 2.7 kilograms.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Elena Pogodina, the information coordinator from the Murmansk City Health Department, has been working through the Internet to make contacts at other health care institutions that have carried out research on the effectiveness of various treatments for heart disease. Elena came into contact with Susan Fleming, a graduate student studying cardiology issues who was also interested in Murmansk Oblast

Hospital. Elena put Ms. Fleming in touch with Dr. Gary Klein, the head of the cardioreanimation department at Murmansk Oblast Hospital, and they have begun a correspondence via e-mail. (April 1998)

Mihaela Sinca from the Institute of Public Health in Cluj-Napoca, Romania has been helping the health education and health promotion staff at the Institute to find other institutions that can provide guides to the objectives and methods they use in the field of health promotion. Sites such as Health Promotion Bookmarks (<http://www.web.net/~stirling/>) and Health Promotion on the Internet (<http://www.monash.edu.au/health/hprnlink.htm>) have been particularly useful starting points that have helped staff in identifying projects, initiatives and models of activity to help them design their own local health promotion programs. Staff at the Institute are working on programs in the areas of prevention of substance abuse and communicable diseases and life quality assessments. (April 1998)

Vladimir Shengelidze, chief endoscopist at City Hospital No. 2 in Tbilisi, Georgia, has used the hospital's e-mail connection to get in touch with the U.S. Endoscopy Association. With the help of Mari Mikeladze, the hospital's information coordinator, Dr. Shengelidze has been able to correspond with Julie Famico, the membership secretary, and has become an Internet Member of the USEA. Through this collaboration, he has also been able to communicate with the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE; <http://www.asge.org>) about obtaining equipment for the hospital.

RESOURCES FOR HEALTH POLICY REFORM

In March 1998, the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs called upon a working group of gynecologists from Tallinn Central Hospital to prepare the text of an Abortion and Sterilization Law. In developing the law, the working group used the Internet to access different judicial databases in Estonia and the European Union in order to compare the standards applied in various countries. Dr. Ferenc Szirko, an information coordinator and head of the working group, was able to find a variety of legal resources using the LawCrawler Legal Web Search engine (<http://lawcrawler.com>), EUR-Lex, a database of European Union legislation (<http://europa.eu.int>), and an Estonian legal database (<http://www.seadus.ips.ee>). Among the documents they used to help write the law were the Council of Europe's Bioethics Convention and a WHO document on patient rights in Europe. While maintaining regular correspondence with the Ministry via e-mail, the working group completed the text of the law, which has subsequently been passed by the Estonian Cabinet of Ministers and will be discussed by the Parliament in June 1998.

Members of the Health Reform Project at the Dubna City Health Administration have been applying the principles of evidence-based practice in their efforts to create new clinical care pathways. Natalia Osipova, Medical Coordinator of the project, and her colleagues have developed new care pathways for five common diagnoses. To define the appropriate standards for diagnostics, treatment, and consultations, they have used guidelines from the Agency for Health Care Policy Research (<http://text.nlm.nih.gov>), as well as articles obtained from Ovid (<http://ovid.sara.nl>), various Russian-language Web sites, the ZdravReform CD-ROM and the "Manual for Clinical Quality Improvement" (the last two resources were both developed by Abt Associates, Inc.). Using these same resources, Alexander Antipenko, Quality Coordinator for the project has been working to develop a Quality Management System for Dubna medical institutions. The partnership's information coordinator, Julia Muravievskaya, has also been working to encourage evidence-based approaches by distributing patient information and training materials that she has gleaned from the Internet to the Dubna Women's Health Center and to coordinators of a project to establish a Bronchial Asthma School where patients and their families will receive training on how to live with and control the disease. Julia and her colleagues have found Russian-language Internet sites to be particularly useful. Specifically, the Russian Medical Server (<http://www.rusmedserv.com>), Vse lechitsya Hochut (<http://www.rvh.khv.ru>), and "1001 Prescriptions for the Petersburg Physician" (<http://www.rid.spb.ru/1001/default.asp>).

EVIDENCE-BASED RESOURCES FOR CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

On May 8-9, the Women's Clinic at Tallinn Central Hospital held the first all-Estonian seminar on "Colposcopy, Cytology and Pathology of the Uterine Cervix." In preparing for the seminar, gynecologists, oncologists, and pathologists (including 5 from the Clinic) prepared 15 lectures using evidence-based sources obtained from the hospital's Learning Resource Center. Presenters used sources from CANCERLIT (<http://cnetdb.nci.nih.gov/cancerlitsrch.shtml>) as well as "Introduction to Colposcopy" (<http://lib-sh.lsumc.edu/fammed/Atlases/colpoat.html>). The clinic also used information from the Internet to produce a special newsletter, which included summaries of lectures and two articles - "Comparison of Cervical Cytology Classifications - PAP and Bethesda Classification" and "Colposcopic Diagnosis - Treatment and Follow-up." The seminar was attended by over 130 participants and was officially registered at Tartu University to provide post-graduate education credit.

FROM PARTNER INSTITUTIONS INTO THE COMMUNITY

Alexander Hlavaty, who recently took over as information coordinator at the Learning Resource Center in Banska Bystrica's city hall (which is involved in the Slovakia-Cleveland Community Health partnership), has had to adapt the traditional model of an LRC. Because the majority of potential users do not work within the city hall itself, Alexander has tried to come up with an approach that would provide access to the wide base of institutions that are involved in the partnership. These institutions include hospitals, non-governmental public health institutions, schools, non-medical universities, non-governmental social institutions, charitable organizations, and private physicians. Alexander began by sending out over a hundred letters throughout the city, telling people about the location and hours of operation of the LRC as well as describing the services and resources available. He also encouraged people to contact him with requests for information. In the first month after sending out these letters, Alexander received 103 information requests. Alexander has also been active in trying to help other institutions obtain their own Internet access. He recently trained someone from Rooswelt Hospital Library on how to use the Internet and is now working to help them create their own Internet connection for the hospital. (April 1998)

For more information about AIHA's Learning Resource Center project, please see AIHA's web site at index.jsp?sid=1&id=1279&pid=4739 or contact Mark Storey, AIHA LRC project coordinator, at mstorey@igc.org.