

# Learning Resource Centers

The adoption of evidence-based practice in medicine is one of the core components of AIHA's strategy to improve health outcomes in the NIS and CEE. Working to promote both immediate and long-term improvements in clinical care at individual, institutional, and systemic levels, AIHA's Learning Resource Center (LRC) project supplies

healthcare professionals with current information on the most effective practices within their specialization, while helping these professionals build new programs rooted in evidence-based medicine.

LRCs are institution- or community-based telecenters, which consist of at least one computer with Internet access,

a scanner that allows partners to digitize clinical images for use in teleconsultations, and a collection of health and medical databases. These centers are designed to enable partners to overcome decades of isolation from information—an isolation that has discouraged the adaptation of clinical practices to reflect changing international standards of healthcare provision. In addition to providing a direct link to current information sources, the LRCs also offer new opportunities for education, communication, and collaboration within the AIHA partnership network, as well as with the international health community.

Each LRC is managed by an information coordinator who is responsible for providing training, outreach, and information support to personnel, patients, and members of the local community. The information coordinator and other LRC staff are also responsible for working with healthcare professionals at their institutions to conduct periodic literature reviews to facilitate the evaluation of current standards of practice relating to clinical diagnosis and treatment, preventive health services, and health promotion or education.

Since 1995, AIHA and its partners have established 140 LRCs. Altogether, these Centers are providing information and communication services to a community of 99,000 health professionals across Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. In addition to meeting the information technology needs of partner institutions, Centers provide support to in excess of 27,000 other medical professionals and community members each year, including approximately 1,500 patients.

*"At the LRCs, one has access to the latest scientific, reference, and educational information, as well as the possibility for boundless dialogue with colleagues. . . . The work at the Center promotes constant creative and professional growth—not only for [information coordinators], but for students, teachers, and practitioners."*

*Zhyldyzkhan Ismailova, head, Information Resource Center, Kyrgyz State Medical Academy, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek/Reno partnership).*



PHOTO: BARRY KINSELLA

AIHA information coordinators often conduct training workshops such as this one at the health management education LRC in Trnava, Slovakia.

Информационный координатор АМСЗ проводит занятие по организации здравоохранения в Центре учебных ресурсов в Трнаве, Словакия.

- Information coordinators from AIHA's LRCs have trained nearly 23,000 healthcare professionals in the use of computers and the Internet as tools of evidence-based research and have responded to some 71,000 requests for information from clinicians and patients since 1997.
- In 2002 alone, AIHA's LRCs provided technical assistance to more than 41,000 healthcare professionals, students, patients, and community members.
- Developed by LRC staff, the Web server of Odessa Oblast Hospital—which includes an on-line drug index as well as several on-line medical journals—was named one of the 20 most visited Russian-language medical sites by the Russian Medical Server.
- Staff of the LRC located at Vladivostok City Hospital No. 2 have developed a series of weekly lectures to give healthcare professionals an understanding of the rationale for an evidence-based approach to clinical practice and to enable staff to critically appraise articles about diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy.
- Neonatologists from Faculty Hospital in Kosice, Slovakia, actively use the LRC's digital camera and other resources to conduct teleconsultations with specialists from around the world. The physicians regularly send photographs and X-rays to their AIHA partners, as well as to other specialists they have made contact with through the Internet.

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