

**LRC Highlights**  
**April - June 2003**

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.

For more information about AIHA's Learning Resource Center project, please see AIHA's Web site at <http://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](mailto:mstorey@igc.org).

Contents:

Applications of Evidence-Based Practice  
LRC Outreach into the Community  
LRCs as Health Promotion Centers  
Promoting LRC / Partner Sustainability  
Application of Information Technology, Telemedicine, and Databases

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**Applications of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)**

Using the Practice Standard Review methodology, the staff at Joint City Hospital No. 6 in Baku, Azerbaijan, have been comparing their existing practices to the latest available evidence. The reviews in the areas of general practice, pediatrics, surgery and obstetrics/gynecology have led to some significant changes in practice standards and yielded impressive results: a 30% decrease in the hospitalization rate for arterial hypertension, a 20% decrease in hospitalizations for gastric and duodenal ulcers, a 15% drop in the number of complicated deliveries, a one-third decrease in the number of complications and mortality cases in the intensive care unit, and controlled bronchial asthma status for 70% of patients. Furthermore, following the implementation of these guidelines, patient satisfaction levels with the quality of medical care rose from 20% to 65%.

The Information Coordinator at the Faculty of Medicine at Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, took part in a working group whose task was to determine criteria for quality assessment of scientific papers published by the staff. To help resolve a heated internal debate about the value of conference abstracts published either in Conference Proceedings or in peer-reviewed journals, the Information Coordinator conducted a search showing that: presentations at scientific meetings are an important part of the dissemination of knowledge; half of these studies appear only as abstracts and never undergo any other peer review; presentation of results in abstracts at scientific meetings is the first and often only publication; approximately 50% of the studies initially presented in abstract form are subsequently published as full-length reports within 2 years of appearance as abstracts; there may be a positive-outcome bias in successful subsequent publication in a peer review journal; and abstracts are cited as often as fully published papers. This report helped to change the negative attitude of the Medical Faculty management towards conference abstracts published in peer-reviewed journals.

The results of a Practice Standard Review evaluating the value of morphologic lab tests of tissue removed during tonsillectomies and adenoidectomies, prepared by the staff of the otolaryngology department of the

First Tashkent Medical Institute in Uzbekistan, led to changes in practice guidelines at the hospital. The guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of patients with tonsillitis were amended to exclude mandatory histology lab tests for tissue sampling due to their low informative value and considerable cost. These changes had already helped to significantly decrease the workload of the histology laboratory and are beginning to show positive economic impact.

On the initiative of the Information Coordinator, an EBP working group was recently established at the General Hospital in Zadar, Croatia. The group includes an infectologist, a microbiologist, a nurse, and the Information Coordinator. The members of the group plan to introduce the EBP approach to the healthcare community and to educate healthcare workers on EBP information resources. A team of five nurses had already conducted the first training session, and the group hopes to get nurses more interested in EBP by helping to address problems in their everyday work.

Based on the latest information on herpes zoster (shingles), staff at Hospital No. 2 in Vladivostok, Russia, are implementing new guidelines that emphasize early prevention and appropriate treatment. Herpes zoster affects up to half of all people who live to 85 years of age and can lead to long term morbidity. Appropriate treatment helps to control acute symptoms and reduces the risk of longer term complications. The most common complication in immunocompromised patients is distress and sometimes intractable chronic pain. Most cases of zoster can be managed in primary care settings, but a full understanding of the condition is essential. The Web sites of the International Herpes Management Forum ([www.IHMF.org](http://www.IHMF.org)) and Varicella Zoster Virus Research Foundation ([www.vzvfoundation.org](http://www.vzvfoundation.org)) have provided Vladivostok physicians with additional information and resources in the management of herpes zoster.

The staff of the Krai Clinical Hospital in Stavropol, Russia, recently established a new Expert Committee. One of the goals of this Committee is to use evidence-based medicine to determine the clinical and economic effectiveness of preventive, diagnostic and treatment practices at the hospital. LRC resources as well as EBP materials acquired by the hospital are being utilized to support the decision-making of the Committee members. Additionally, staff developed an annual EBP implementation plan, which includes training sessions for hospital physicians, dissemination of educational resources, and other activities.

Using information found on the Internet on renal artery embolization for patients with kidney cancer, the surgeons of the Railway Clinical Hospital in L'viv, Ukraine, were able to plan the tactical aspects of nephrectomy for a 52-year old cancer patient. The new strategy helped to reduce bleeding during the surgery, which lowered the trauma risk for the patient.

Responding to the need for up-to-date information related to the recent outbreaks of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) throughout the world, LRCs used the Internet and other electronic resources to educate their staff and the public about the disease:

- In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the LRC staff at the Republican Center for Emergency Medicine researched the clinical course of typical pneumonia as compared with known information on SARS, and developed a new protocol for suspected SARS cases.
- The Information Coordinator at the Institute of Public Health in Tirana, Albania, translated the SARS Reference ([www.SARSReference.com](http://www.SARSReference.com)), a medical textbook that provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of SARS, into Albanian. The translation (officially licensed by the publisher) will soon appear as part of a special volume that also includes information on other aspects of SARS and a review of preventive measures adopted in Albania.

- In Dubna, Russia, a representative of the city Health Administration used the LRC resources to prepare a presentation for the local television station on SARS symptoms and preventive methods.
- The staff of the Gudushauri National Medical Center in Tbilisi, Georgia, is preparing a curriculum for a new training course on SARS. Using resources received through mailing lists and researched on the Internet, the course will be offered to the staff of the medical center and medical personnel from other institutions. The staff also plan to submit the curriculum for accreditation to receive official continuing medical education course status.
- Several LRCs in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine, regularly update their colleagues on the latest SARS information through staff meeting announcements, specially organized lectures, bulletin board postings, newsletter articles, and informational leaflets. Patients also learn about SARS through educational Q&A brochures, local newspaper articles, and information board postings.

### **LRC Outreach Into the Community**

LRCs at the Gudushauri National Medical Center and the National Information Learning Center (NILC) in Tbilisi, Georgia, jointly organized the first Georgian interactive distance learning course called “Medical Personnel Preparedness and Response to Biological, Chemical and Radiological Terrorist Attacks.” This training course was a part of the Georgian Physician Congress held in Tbilisi May 2-5, 2003. LRC staff developed the course curriculum, presentations, and handouts and provided the necessary technical support. Forty-eight medical students and physicians in the cities of Batumi and Kutaisi participated in the distance learning course. This course has been officially accredited, and participants received continuing medical education credits in emergency and disaster medicine.

The LRC staff at the Korsakov Rayon Hospital on Sakhalin Island, Russia, have been providing support to a number of local and regional organizations and community members. They consulted the administration of the Chapaevo village on the use of Internet resources and e-mail utilities, and helped with grant research. The LRC staff have also met with Chapaevo schoolchildren and demonstrated the technical and informational capabilities of the LRC. Representatives of local organizations, including “Mercy and Health” and the Korsakov Veterans’ Society, regularly access the Internet at the LRC for their research and communication needs.

The Information Coordinator at the University Hospital “Mother Teresa” in Tirana, Albania, was invited to facilitate a training session at a health administration and management training course for an international collaboration project. This project, between Albanian Ministry of Health and an Italian NGO, aims to strengthen healthcare management capacity and provides financial support for an Internet connection at the participating Vlora Hospital. The Information Coordinator provided training on health information tools and disseminated a user manual for the Cochrane Library in Albanian along with other resources.

The LRC at the Armavir Polyclinic in Armenia has been actively supporting the collaboration between Armavir partners and Carelift International, a US-based humanitarian aid organization. The LRC serves as the main administrative center for official meetings, preparation of the humanitarian aid dissemination paperwork, and other activities. Recently, the LRC staff prepared a special illustrated report with success stories demonstrating how donated medical equipment and supplies have helped the patients of the Armavir region.

### **LRCs as Health Promotion Centers**

The staff of the Center for Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Diseases at City Polyclinic No. 36 in Minsk, Belarus, together with the LRC staff organized two educational sessions for patients suffering from chronic cardiovascular conditions. This training, which drew over 50 patients, was conducted at a clinical hospital and at another polyclinic in Minsk. Participants learned about cardiovascular health and self-management measures, and received brochures about patient information resources available at the Polyclinic No. 36 LRC.

Together with their Iowa partners, the LRC staff at the Medical Information Analytical Center in Samara, Russia, prepared two CD-ROMs with educational videos for patients. The CDs include segments on cervical cancer, puberty and adolescent behavior, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, and patient assessment. The partners plan to distribute the CDs to clinic sites in the area to educate patients on these healthcare issues.

The LRC staff at the Korsakov Rayon Hospital on Sakhalin Island, Russia, have developed and disseminated throughout the region brochures and posters for patient education on the following topics: diphtheria among children, bad habits and their effects on children, vitamins for women, immunizations, hormonal contraceptives, puberty and adolescence, smoking cessation, diabetes, cancer, gynecologic exams for girls, chronic pulmonary conditions, and tuberculosis.

### **Promoting LRC / Partner Sustainability**

The Library at the Faculty of Medicine, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, has received a grant from the Czech Agency for Higher Educational Development to set up a specialized collection of pharmacology and toxicology periodicals. Additionally, the Ministry of Healthcare allocated \$25,000 to maintain the subscription of biomedical journals available exclusively at the LRC. To support the technological infrastructure, the library has also received a \$7,000 grant from the Ministry to purchase equipment for color printing and copying.

The Institute of Public Health in Cluj, Romania, received a Communicable Diseases Surveillance grant from the European Union. The LRC's role in this project is to develop an information system at the institute. Additionally, some funds from this grant might be used for the improvement of the Internet connection at the Institute.

The Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan, Armenia, has received a grant from the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) to provide cervical cancer screening to low-income families from remote regions of the country. Center staff learned about the grant program through the Internet and used e-mail to communicate with PATH staff and to submit the final proposal. In addition to screening services, the grant provides funds for treatment of women with cervical abnormalities.

### **Application of Information Technology, Telemedicine, and Databases**

With the support from the Ukrainian Ministry of Health and local healthcare departments, the LRC staff at Polyclinic No. 5 in L'viv, Ukraine, has developed a new computerized healthcare management system. For over a year this SQL-based system has simplified the work of the polyclinic staff by offering easy access to patient records, staff data, a drug formulary, normative documents, a medical reference guide, primary care resources, diagnostic data, lab results, and other information. The Ministry of Health is currently considering replicating this system at other healthcare institutions.

The LRC at the Children's Hospital No. 4 in Minsk, Belarus, has facilitated a teleconsultation that helped to diagnose a rare gastric disease for a three-year old girl. The hospital physicians treated the girl for

repeated stomach hemorrhages, but couldn't establish a precise diagnosis. In making the diagnosis, they needed to rule out the rare Zollinger-Ellison syndrome, but lacked the technical and laboratory resources necessary to measure gastrin levels in the blood. Using the LRC, the physicians reached out to colleagues in Europe and the US for help. They were soon able to send blood samples to Mainz, Germany, where the blood tests confirmed the Zollinger-Ellison syndrome diagnosis. Using this information, Minsk physicians prescribed high dosages of antisecretory drugs to stabilize the condition, which helped to heal the stomach erosions.

Laboratory physicians at the Ambulance Hospital in Almaty, Kazakhtan, have recently used e-mail for a distance education course on infectious diseases. They received the theoretical portion of the course via e-mail and learned practical aspects from an instructor who came to the hospital for hands-on sessions. The participants were very pleased with this blended learning approach, enjoying the convenience of both the practical and theoretical aspects of the training.

The LRC staff at the Darnitsky Rayon Polyclinic in Kiev, Ukraine, has created a health information system, which was implemented at the polyclinic (for 137,000 patient records), Children's polyclinic No. 1 (52,000 records), and soon will be established at the local family medicine center. Developed in collaboration with engineers from ProFix company, the system provides morbidity analysis tools, comprehensive electronic patient records, and economic analysis capabilities. The LRC staff are also actively involved in training medical personnel in the district to use computers and operate the new system. Currently, the program is undergoing an official licensing process.

A group of physicians from Maternity House No. 1 in Kurgan, Russia, has been participating in a distance learning course on modern antimicrobial therapy methods using the Antibiotic.ru Web site. The physicians contacted the organizers of the course at the Scientific Research Institute of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy and the State Medical Academy in Smolensk, Russia, and reached an agreement that the course trainers will travel to Kurgan to conduct the final certification at the Maternity Hospital.