

LRC Highlights
April - June 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 go to lrc.aiha.com 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>]

The Evidence-Based Practice Specialist (EBPS) at the Mirkasimov Republican Clinical Hospital in Baku, Azerbaijan, has developed a new method for fulfilling information requests. Initially, when colleagues come to the LRC to ask for the latest resources on their topic of interest, the EBP Specialist shows them how to conduct searches using available CD-ROMs and Internet-based resources such as MEDLINE, HINARI, Clinical Evidence, and Evidence-Based Medicine Guidelines Web sites. Following this search, the EBPS explains the principles of critical appraisal, and together they select results based on their methodological quality, validity, and relevance. Using this approach, several physicians from Mirkasimov and other city hospitals have gained practical skills and received the latest resources on ciliary arrhythmia, tuberculosis and pediatric acute bronchitis. For the last topic, the physicians also referred to the Practice Standard Review on the use of antibiotics for the treatment of acute bronchitis developed by colleagues from Baku Polyclinic #8.

Despite official government policies and high popularity among the public for patient education programs, physicians at Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, had lingering questions about the effectiveness

of the polyclinic's School of Hypertension and other similar educational programs. Together with assistant chief physician, the Information Coordinator searched for evidence and, based on the analysis of their findings, organized a presentation for polyclinic physicians and nurses. The research showed that patient education about arterial hypertension and other chronic conditions can be an effective instrument of disease control and prevention. The presentation also highlighted specific factors that impact the effectiveness of such programs. As a result of this discussion, a task group was formed to develop standards and criteria for patient education programs organized at the polyclinic.

Based on the results of a Practice Standard Review on uterine artery embolization, the staff at the Krai Clinical Hospital in Stavropol, Russia, decided to start using this procedure as a reasonable alternative to myomectomy and hysterectomy, which are regularly performed at the hospital. The information about the effectiveness of uterine artery embolization, and its advantages relative to other surgical procedures, was presented at a meeting of hospital OB/GYN physicians. The staff are also considering organizing their own clinical trial to study some of the uncertain effects of the procedure.

The LRC staff at the First Tashkent State Medical Institute in Uzbekistan received an information request from a family physician who was concerned about a patient suffering from frequent asthma attacks at night and was allergic to most commonly prescribed medications. The search for the latest evidence revealed an additional examination procedure that helps to determine etiologic factors for nocturnal asthma. The use of this procedure showed that the patient's nocturnal asthma was triggered by reflux esophagitis, the treatment of which led to a reduction in asthma attacks, sleep improvement and better overall well-being of the patient.

Following successful implementation of several clinical practice guidelines at Joint Hospital #6 in Baku, Azerbaijan, (see April – June 2003 issue of the *LRC Highlights* bulletin), several other healthcare institutions in the Binagadi district of Baku are implementing the new standards. Physicians at Outpatient Clinic #39 are implementing guidelines for the treatment of gastric and duodenal ulcers using proton pump inhibitors, and staff at pediatric and adult polyclinics in the district are continuing to follow asthma severity classification to treat bronchial asthma. At Joint Hospital #6, cardiologists and primary care physicians are beginning to use "Arifon-retard" drug for the treatment of arterial hypertension according to the new guidelines.

Using the Cochrane Library and other CD-ROMs available at the LRC of the Women's Wellness Center in Tirana, Albania, physicians were able to find information about the effectiveness of prostaglandins in obstetric procedures. Based on this information, the WWC introduced a new standard for the use of prostaglandins for the induction of delivery.

In 2003, the staff of the Regional Perinatal Center in L'viv, Ukraine, completed two Practice Standard Reviews that showed the effectiveness of Diprivan anesthetic agent. Since then, the physicians at the Center have been successfully using the drug not only for small gynecologic operations, but also for laparoscopies and large intracavitary surgeries.

LRC Outreach Into the Community

In 2004, the Medical Information and Analysis Center in Samara, Russia, began publishing a new journal – *Issues in Healthcare Quality Management*. The first issue, available at www.medlan.samara.ru, includes articles on evidence-based medicine, quality care management for outpatient clinics, pharmoeconomics, clinical practice guidelines for anemia in pregnancy, quality assessment and standardization for municipal healthcare, analysis of maternal mortality for quality care issues, and quality assessment of geriatric services.

To reach out to the faculty, health professionals, and current and prospective medical students, the LRC staff at the First Tashkent State Medical Institute in Uzbekistan developed a Web site—www.lrcuz.nm.ru—that provides a variety of useful resources in Russian and Uzbek languages, in addition to the information about the LRC and its capabilities. The site offers the only electronic full-text versions of the *Medical Journal of Uzbekistan* and quarterly *Neurology* journal. The Web site also provides conference abstracts from recent Student Scientific Society meetings and other specialized conferences held in Uzbekistan in the recent years. Other resources posted on the site include useful links, practice recommendations, and teleconsultation capabilities.

The National Center for Disease Control in Tbilisi, Georgia, has recently organized an LRC Open House for students from the Faculty of Medicine at the Tbilisi State Medical University. In addition to learning about the LRC and its resources, the students had an opportunity to gain hands-on skills in basic computer applications (MS Office, e-mail, graphics programs) and find current literature for their scientific projects using MEDLINE and the Cochrane Library. The NCDC LRC also disseminates information resources, such as guidelines for prevention and control of rabies in Georgia, on its Web site at www.ncdc.ge.

In preparation for the summer season, the LRC staff at the Family Medicine Training Center in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, provided the city health administration and local healthcare providers with educational information packets on intestinal infections and pediatric emergencies. These materials were found on the Internet and translated from Russian into Turkmen.

The LRC staff at the Oblast Student Hospital in Kharkiv, Ukraine, provided informational and technical assistance for a nursing conference that was held at the hospital in May 2004. Using the Internet, they found information on the role of nurses, nursing leadership, and nursing history, which was used to prepare Powerpoint presentations for the conference.

LRCs as Health Promotion Centers

Several times every month a group of staff from the Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan, Armenia, travels to the regions to offer free screening services to women. During these visits, physicians and LRC staff organize educational presentations and distribute printed materials on breast and cervix health, healthy lifestyle, and other women's health issues.

The LRC at the Health House in Gjilan, Kosovo, has recently provided information for an educational presentation on scabies and the dangers of smoking for the local elementary school. Among the resources used for the presentation, the Information Coordinator found a Handbook of Dermatology and Venereology (www.hkmj.org.hk/skin/stdframe.htm), which was also shared with other physicians at the Health House. Recently, the LRC also disseminated information on diabetes mellitus, arterial hypertension, and heart failure in Albanian and Croatian languages.

In preparation for the World No Tobacco Day, a nurse and valeologist from the Center for Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Diseases at City Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, used the Internet to prepare an anti-smoking educational program for adolescents at local schools.

Promoting LRC / Partner Sustainability

Based on the results of a Practice Standard Review, the Information Coordinator at the Faculty of Medicine at Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic, in collaboration with the head of the University Orthopaedic Clinic, submitted a research project proposal to the Ministry of Health for the

development of a pre-operative patient education program for patients with hip and knee replacements. The goal of the grant proposal is to give evidence of higher effectiveness of pre-operative group classes for patients undergoing total hip and knee replacements as compared to the traditional, individual, and mainly post-operative education at the University Orthopaedic Clinic. A change in the system of patient education is expected to bring about post-operative care enhancement with potential economic outcomes, improved patient information levels, satisfaction and well-being. A comparison will be made of two sets of total joint replacement patients (250 patients each) selected randomly. An important part of the project will be devoted to the development of new educational materials (printed, multimedia, mini-tests, web applications) and improvement of technical facilities (data projector). The major outcome of the project will be the establishment of new organizational conditions for pre-operative patient education at the University Orthopaedic Clinic with possible transfer to other surgical departments with elective surgeries.

As part of the Baku-Houston partnership dissemination conference, the LRC staff at the Mirkasimov Republican Clinical Hospital conducted an LRC Open House for the representatives from twelve rural district hospitals throughout Azerbaijan. Based on presentations and discussions that highlighted the role of the LRC in the implementation of evidence-based practice improvements, healthcare administrators from the district hospitals requested to send a number of their physicians to the LRC to receive training on medical information searching and the principles of evidence-based medicine. The Open House also showcased the activities of the satellite LRC at the Sabirabad District Hospital. Impressed with the opportunities provided by the LRCs for professional development, healthcare administrators have agreed to pursue various funding options to replicate the LRC model at their institutions. This includes internal institutional budgets, requests to the Ministry of Health, and collaboration for joint grant applications to international organizations.

The LRC at the Regional Perinatal Center in L'viv, Ukraine, received a \$200 grant for the development of a Web site that would provide health education information for local women. This proposal was developed and presented at the regional workshop "Problem solving for improvements in community health" organized by Solus and Dreyfus Health Foundation in May 2004.

Application of Information Technology, Telemedicine, and Databases

With the help of the Internet, the Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan, Armenia, was able to help a pregnant patient receive appropriate dental care. The woman's dentist was unsure about pulling a tooth in fear of causing a miscarriage. Severe pain and the fear of losing the baby brought the patient to the AAWC, where, using the mama.ru Web site, the staff were able to consult specialists from the St. Petersburg VIP Dental Clinic. The Russian dentists recommended to extract the tooth and provided specific information on anesthesia and extraction procedures. Following the teleconsultation, the woman returned to her dentist, who, using these recommendations, successfully removed the tooth.

To help a young girl suffering from familial Mediterranean fever, a condition that occurs most commonly in people of Armenian, Arab and Jewish descent, a physician came to the LRC at the Emergency Medicine Center in Vladivostok, Russia, to find more treatment information. His search led to a number of very useful Internet-based resources, including a research institute in Yerevan, Armenia, which specializes in the treatment of this disease. The physician contacted his colleagues in Armenia and, after a brief correspondence, they arranged for the girl to travel to Yerevan for further treatment.