

LRC Project Highlights July - September 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.

Contents:

Application 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

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>]

A group of radiologists from the Maternity Hospital in Tirana, Albania, consulted LRC CD-ROMs and other resources for guidelines on the application of nuchal translucency, a procedure that offers an assessment of fetal chromosomal abnormalities and helps to screen pregnant women for amniocentesis. The radiologists introduced this method at the hospital's new Prenatal Diagnosis department in June 2004, but specific guidelines were necessary to develop a selection process that would allow only high-risk women to undergo nuchal translucency. LRC resources were helpful in identifying similar practices in the UK, Germany, Austria, and the US, and with the help of the Information Coordinator, nuchal translucency application instructions were translated into Albanian and disseminated among hospital physicians.

Using the Cochrane Library and Internet-based resources, the EBP Specialist and a physician from Polyclinic #36 in Minsk, Belarus, prepared a Practice Standard Review on the use of fibrates for the treatment of atherogenic hyperlipemia. Based on this review as well as the new European recommendations for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases for patients with atherosclerosis, polyclinic physicians developed a protocol, which is adapted for local clinical and economic conditions. Based on this protocol, polyclinic physicians already began identifying patients who are

suffering from dyslipemia, under particular combinations of cardiovascular or diabetic conditions, for proper treatment using lipid-lowering therapy.

Based on the results of the latest Practice Standard Review, the Information Coordinator and his colleagues from the Institute of Epidemiology at the Comenius University in Martin, Slovakia, published an article in the *Expert Opinion on Pharmacotherapy* journal. The article, entitled “Economic rewarding of smoking cessation-facilitating drugs—a comparison of over-the-counter and prescribed nicotine replacement therapy,” discusses clinical effectiveness and economic efficacy of the two methods of nicotine replacement therapy, and draws conclusions about the role of health insurance providers and the future use of such methods in CEE countries. (*Expert Opin. Pharmacother.* (2004), 5(3): 487-491.)

Using MEDLINE and other resources, the Information Coordinator at the Central Regional Hospital in Tomsk, Russia, has been able to help a staff member to avoid an unnecessary and costly thyroid surgery. The polyclinic’s medical registrar needed additional information to help determine whether she should undergo thyroid surgery for Graves’ endocrine ophthalmopathy, which was offered to her at the endocrine ambulatory clinic. Articles retrieved using MEDLINE and other databases showed that thyroidectomy is ineffective in treating this condition, helping the woman to make an informed choice about her options.

LRC Outreach Into the Community

Every month, the Information Coordinator at the Town Health Center in Lezha, Albania, makes presentations at the monthly meetings of local family physicians. Usually, these presentations focus on a particular practice or healthcare topic. For example, the last three seminars covered patient self-management of chronic conditions, family practice in the United States, and the association between health literacy and diabetes outcomes. Materials for these presentations were extracted from the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) using HINARI. Additionally, the Information Coordinator presents up-to-date health information at the weekly meetings of the Town Health Center staff. At the last several meetings, the staff received information about contraceptive methods and primary care resources for mothers and children. These presentations also serve the purpose of informing local healthcare professionals about electronic resources, textbooks, and CD-ROMs available at the LRC. In recent months, the LRC resources collection has grown considerably due to active outreach by the LRC staff for free materials produced by such organizations as EngenderHealth, PATH, and TALC.

For more than three years, the Information Coordinator from the Medical-Sanitary Unit #50 in Sarov, Russia, has been actively participating in and providing up-to-date health information to local electronic newsgroups. Recently, a discussion at one of the most active newsgroups called into question the usefulness of vaccinations and in particular cast doubt upon the need for the city-wide vaccination campaign for children against Hepatitis B. To dispel any misconceptions and to inform the public about the issue, the Information Coordinator conducted an active educational campaign, explaining vaccination procedures and providing a variety of materials about Hepatitis B, vaccine production, statistical data on potential complications, etc.

The Gavar branch of the Armenian Wellness Center in Yerevan, Armenia, has been recently set up with a new computer and Internet connectivity. To support this new development, once a week the LRC staff and other physicians from Yerevan travel to Gavar to provide training to local physicians on how to use the computer and the Internet, and to disseminate educational brochures developed by the LRC staff on healthy lifestyle, domestic violence, importance of disease prevention measures, and other topics.

LRCs as Health Promotion Centers

The LRC staff at the Korsakov Central Rayon Hospital on Sakhalin Island, Russia, have been actively supporting hospital- and community-level health promotion activities. In the recent months they have expanded their growing inventory of educational materials by designing brochures and posters on alcohol myths and sexually transmitted infections. The LRC staff have also provided information resources and technical support during a health fair in the village of Novikovo, which attracted close to 400 people, and for patient education programs on bronchial asthma, arterial hypertension, and prevention of bedsores.

Promoting LRC / Partner Sustainability

The LRC staff at the First Tashkent Medical Institute in Uzbekistan have expanded their initial list of fees for services in order to help sustain some of the LRC expenses. In particular, they established a price list for equipment and room rental, training, and information requests for external customers.

To maintain Internet connectivity and LRC activities after the discontinuation of AIHA funding, the administration of Armavir Polyclinic in Armavir, Armenia, has negotiated additional funding from the US partners at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

Application of Information Technology, Telemedicine, and Databases

A physician from the department of endocrinology at the First Tashkent Medical Institute in Tashkent used the LRC digital camera, scanner, and e-mail connectivity to conduct a teleconsultation with Swinfen Charitable Trust in Australia. International help was necessary to determine the diagnosis for a patient with symptoms of hypothalamic syndrome or adrenal hyperplasia. MRI images and other information sent via e-mail helped to diagnose the patient. The Uzbek physician also received several therapy recommendations from Australian colleagues, which were promptly used for patient treatment.

Using the LRC scanner and e-mail, a physician from Lezha district hospital in Albania sent X-ray images for a patient suffering from renal calculosis to colleagues at the Department of Radiology at the University of Tirana Hospital. Consulting physicians in Tirana explained the location of the calculus and the difficulty of its detection, suggesting to transfer the patient to the University Hospital for additional scintigraphy and CT tomography examinations. The patient was quickly moved to Tirana for further examination.