

LRC Highlights
October - December 1997

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

EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE IN PRACTICE:

Based on information obtained through the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews on CD-ROM and Ovid's Medline Gateway, FERENC SZIRKO (szirko@tkh.sps.ee) and his colleagues from Tallinn Central Hospital in Estonia have introduced a new method for performing Caesarian sections. According to Ferenc, this new technique, which is done without peritoneal closure, has resulted in a reduction of operating time and use of suture material. Also, this month, Ferenc helped the head of the Gynecology Department prepare for a lecture on laparoscopy by providing information on the newest techniques as well as illustrations that he found on the Internet.

NATALIA IVANENKO (comd@imfiko.bishkek.su) from the Kyrgyz Research Institute of Obstetrics and Pediatrics in Bishkek reports that, following the information coordinator training workshop held in Lviv last July, she shared the materials that were distributed on evidence-based medicine with her colleagues. Natalia has also started receiving useful information through the Evidence-based-Health mailing list. (To subscribe to this list, send the message "join evidence-based-health firstname lastname" to mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk or, for archives of information distributed on this list, go to <http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists-a-e/evidence-based-health/>.) As a result, researchers at the Institute are now conducting double-blind randomized trials in their research programs on "Etiological and pathogenic substantiation and assessment of far-out forms of treatment and rehabilitation for toxicosis in pregnant women" and "Development of Biphydo- and Colyferous bio additions for prevention and treatment of hypogalactia and improvement of breast feeding." According to the fundamental principles of evidence-based medicine, use of the double-blind randomized method will improve the study design and thereby increase the reliability of the results.

PRACTICAL USE OF INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET:

JULIA MURAVIEVSKAYA (med@dubna.ru) reports that, with Internet access, she and her colleagues from the Dubna City Health Department are finally able to receive the text of laws and decrees from the Russian Ministry of Health in a timely manner. The health ministry has started putting documents on the World Wide Web at http://www.medlux.ru:8001/mfydb/docdb/s_docdb.html and via Russian-language Internet newsgroups. As a result, the Dubna City Health Department is able to efficiently distribute copies of the ministerial documents to all local health and medical institutions in Dubna. (For information on how to subscribe to the Russian-language newsgroups, please see: <http://www.medlux.ru/win/teleconf/>)

OKSANA KIRICHENKO (emedhosp@online.ru) helped a number of staff at Almaty First Aid Hospital in Kazakstan to find information on the Internet for conducting their scientific research. Specifically, Oksana worked with Dr. G. R. Rustemova on "New methods in the diagnosis and treatment of peritonitis," Dr. R. R. Abdulahanova on "Endometrial cancer," Dr. D. Nysanov on "Surgical treatment of isolated aortic valve failure with complicated calcinosis," and Dr. Muhamedgalieva on "Treatment of anastomosis after stomach resection." By finding relevant resources in Medline/Ovid and the Internet, Oksana was able to provide a more comprehensive set of resources than would otherwise have been available to them and also save the researchers a lot of time.

MIHAELA SINCA (mihaela@jeffmcm.soroscj.ro) from the Institute of Public Health in Cluj-Napoca, Romania assisted Dr. Razvan Repede, a specialist in public health and health management from the Epidemiology and Public Health Department, in finding resources related to modern health promotion approaches—particularly in the areas of family health, alcohol/drug consumption, and AIDS. Dr. Repede is working with his colleagues to develop community-oriented methodologies in order to improve health promotion programs in Romania. The information that they found included several models used by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://wonder.cdc.gov>) and other organizations in designing questionnaires, which he then adjusted for local needs in Romania. With the information he obtained, Dr. Repede has begun using new methods for developing and evaluating epidemiological studies and for developing questionnaires in order to validate the data measured by them. The Department has also been using the evidence-based medicine literature that Mihaela received at the July training workshop to design a questionnaire that they are using for a health promotion and behavior management program for the elderly population of the Transylvania region.

EXPANDING LRC OUTREACH:

On October 16 and December 4, JARMILA POTOMKOVA (potomkov@risc.upol.cz -- Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic) and EVA LESENKOVA (library@ipvz.cz -- School of Postgraduate Medical Education in Prague, Czech Republic) conducted training sessions on practical applications of the Internet for 50 medical librarians and physicians from various hospitals in the Czech Republic. The sessions were organized by the School of Postgraduate Medical education. In response to the high level of interest of the participants, Jarmila and Eva are planning to hold more advanced training sessions for the group in the future. They have also received invitations from hospitals in Hradec Kralove, Nachod, Ostrava and Brno to organize similar courses for their staff in 1998.

The Association for Educational Programs in Health Administration LRC in Moscow (IRINA IBRAGHIMOVA, repmos@glasnet.ru) signed an agreement with IREX (<http://www.irex.org>) to disseminate Russian-language materials that have been produced by IREX's health care partnerships in the NIS. Irina is working on getting electronic versions of these documents so that they can be posted on the Internet. Also this month, Irina came into contact with Peter Hilsenrath from the University of Iowa who is developing a course on Russian health care, and she is working with him to provide source materials for the teaching of the course.

PROMOTING LRC SELF-SUSTAINABILITY:

PAVEL GULYAYEV (iopat@online.ru), Institute of Pediatrics in Almaty, Kazakstan has submitted a proposal to the director of his institute to establish the Learning Resource Center as an independent information department for the Institute. The goal of the department would be introduce modern information and computer technologies into the practical work of the physicians and researchers at the Institute. His proposal outlined plans for the future development of the center, including staffing and equipment needs over time. According to Pavel, management of the Institute has reacted very positively, and has offered him the opportunity to supervise the department. They are still working out the details, however, on how the Institute can cover expenses for additional staffing and equipment.

IMPROVING INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

SVETLANA CHURKINA (svetlana@trauma.donetsk.ua) from the Donetsk Oblast Trauma Hospital in Ukraine assisted in the design of a database for patients who undergo endoprosthetic surgery at the hospital. The database is expected to help the hospital keep better track of the patients and to provide data to help them better evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment. Also, during a recent training seminar

conducted at the EMS Center in Donetsk, Ukraine, Svetlana instructed 28 physicians and interns on how to use e-mail and the Internet. Finally, Svetlana produced a booklet describing the activities and capabilities of the Learning Resource Center and distributed this not only to staff at her hospital, but also to other hospitals in Donetsk and to local health department officials.

ANDREW TOOZIAK (andrew@draco.lviv.ua) is working on enhancing the electronic patient record system for the Lviv Regional Neonatal Center in Ukraine. Developed by Dr. Dmytro Dobriansky and other staff at the Center, the "Child" database currently contains data on all patients that have been treated at the Center for the past three years. The database allows physicians to evaluate the effectiveness of different diagnostic and treatment procedures as well as to track the dynamics of patient care and predict future needs. Andrew has been working on developing an automatic data input system for the standardized clinical charts and forms used at the Center. Andrew also communicates on a daily basis with his partners at Henry Ford Health Systems in Detroit, Michigan on a variety of clinical, technical and educational issues. The Detroit partners provide technical support for the repair and maintenance of medical equipment donated by the partnership as well as consultations on difficult cases. Finally, Andrew has been participating in on-line chat conferences organized by International Pediatrics Chat (<http://www.pedschat.org>), which provides Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits on-line. Most recently, he attended a virtual conference entitled: "What can the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) do for pediatricians outside the USA?" AIHA partners from Kosice, Slovakia; Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Chisinau, Moldova; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Jindrichuv Hradec, Czech Republic; and Kiev, Ukraine are also regular participants in the International Pediatrics Chat conferences.

The Clinic for Occupational Diseases in Cluj-Napoca, Romania will be participating in the Romanian Medical Internet Program, which involves the creation of a network that will serve as an on-line medical library for institutions throughout Romania. The network is being sponsored by the Soros Foundation (<http://www.soroscj.ro>) for the first three years, while Romanian participants will be submitting scientific research and published papers on-line in Romanian. Meanwhile, physicians at the clinic have been using the Internet to communicate with their colleagues from all around the world. One physician was able to discuss with a specialist in Japan the effects of silicon carbide (which has been used to replace asbestos) on the health of workers. Studies conducted by physicians in Cluj supported the findings of the Japanese specialist, who found that silicon carbide has the same toxic effects as asbestos. Through his contact with the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Timosaura, Romania, the Clinic's information coordinator, HORATIU BOCSA (horace@jeffcbp.soroscj.ro) was able to receive several free educational software programs, including a software program that teaches how to interpret electrocardiographs. Horatiu has also been working on creating a visual basic application in Microsoft Excel that will automatically calculate data from respiratory tests on patients at the Clinic and save the results into a database. The database will save physicians a great deal of time by automatically calculating the theoretical values for each respiratory parameter and by allowing them to avoid filling out multiple forms and having to search through paper records for a patient's previous records.

ON-LINE CONFERENCING AND COMMUNICATIONS:

At the Kiev Center for Maternal and Child Health in Ukraine, NATALIA KOLOMYS (kievch@aihamch.ru.kiev.ua) is teaching staff how to communicate with their partners using both e-mail and an Internet chat program called mIRC (see Tech Topic on AIHA's Web site at <http://www.aiha.com/index.jsp?sid=1&id=5143&pid=5141&revid=0>). Partners in Kiev have been using e-mail to discuss newborns being treated in the NICU for difficult illnesses and conditions. They are hoping to start using mIRC for live on-line chat sessions as soon as their U.S. partners in Philadelphia have learned how to use the software. Natalia has also been helping to break the English-language barrier facing many of her colleagues by teaching them to use a software called Socrat Translator that translates

text from English into Russian and vice versa. (Until December 1997, the Socrat Translator software was available for free through the Russia On-Line web site--<http://www.online.ru/socrat/>.)

When physicians at the Kyrgyz Institute of Oncology and Radiology in Bishkek disagreed over the course of treatment for a 71-year old patient with breast cancer, they went to partnership information coordinator GALINA SERGEEVA (ahonco@imfiko.bishkek.su). The physicians were undecided as to whether the patient should have surgery, radiation treatment, or chemotherapy. Galina performed searches of Medline and several CD-ROMs, and then sent e-mail messages to partners at the Kansas University Medical Center and another oncologist (from the state of Virginia) who had previously visited the Bishkek Institute. Galina received quick replies from her colleagues, and the physicians chose the course of treatment that was recommended. Galina also reports that in general for cases where the treatment of a patient is in dispute or doubt, physicians are using evidence-based medicine, including the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (on CD-ROM), to get more information.

LARISA KONOVALOVA (lar@child.ru.kiev.ua) from Children's Hospital No. 2 in Kiev, Ukraine, reports that physicians at her hospital are now regularly consulting with their partners and colleagues via the Internet on pediatrics cases. They have been communicating with their U.S. partners at the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia on cases involving pediatric ultrasound and neonates. The U.S. partnership coordinator, Dr. William Schwartz (wschwartz@mail.med.upenn.edu) coordinates with experts in Philadelphia to provide consultations for the Kiev partners. In addition to consulting with the U.S. partners, Larisa has also been regularly participating in consultation requests received from other NIS partners.

ALEKSANDR DUBIKOV (aihavlad@online.vladivostok.ru) and several of his colleagues from the City Hospital No. 2 in Vladivostok, Russia participated in an on-line Web conference on the subject of "New approaches in the treatment of Helicobacter Pylori." The conference allowed the Vladivostok physicians to learn about evidence-based courses of treatment of Helicobacter infection and share their own opinions and experiences regarding the cost-effectiveness of various treatments with other specialists in the field. Aleksandr also has been using evidence-based medicine literature to evaluate the effectiveness of using sandostatin compared to other anti-enzyme drug therapies.

OLGA ASATIANY (ems@nilc.org.ge) from the EMS Training Center in Tbilisi, Georgia recently sent a consultation request to all AIHA information coordinators regarding a 61-year old patient suffering from adenocarcinoma. Along with the case history, she uploaded several clinical images to an FTP site so that consulting physicians could view them. She received a reply from Dr. Mate Kozic, an internist from Croatia who recommended an X-ray evaluation of the patient's bones, biopsy of the lymphatic nodes, and tomography. She also received advice from Dr. K. T. Iazaliev from the Bishkek Institute of Oncology and Radiology (who received the message via GALINA SERGEEVA, the partnership's information coordinator) who also recommended a reexamination of X-rays and put Olga in touch with Professor Boris Matveev, Chief of the Department of Urology at the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences in Moscow. Olga gave the replies to the attending physician, who then consulted with Dr. Matveev. As a result of the consultation, the patient is going to Moscow for further treatment. Olga has also been using teaching modules that she has found on the Internet to prepare lectures for a first aid training course at the EMS Center. These included modules on primary care from Stanford University (<http://www-med.stanford.edu/school/DGIM/Teaching/>), urgent care (<http://www.healthnet.iviv.com/onhealth/common/htm/hpurge.htm>), electrocardiograph rhythms (<http://www.med-edu.com/patient/arrhythmia/rhythms.html>), and an EKG tutorial (<http://www.simtel.net/pub/simtelnet/win95/edu/ecgtut32.zip>).

EVGENIA LIPINA (aihakun@glasnet.ru) from Central Clinical Hospital (CCH) in Moscow has been coordinating patient consultations over the Internet through the hospital's collaboration with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) "Telemedicine: Spacebridge to Russia" project. Evgenia and her colleagues have been testing a special software program developed by NASA that allows them to input information such as the patient history and test results and transmit this over the Internet to NASA specialists in the US. CCH began working with the project in January 1997. Evgenia also recently has collected a large amount of information from the Internet on various medical subjects (including acupuncture and the treatment of trauma, cardiology, anesthesiology and reanimation, and neurology) and distributed these to the relevant departments at the hospital. She also shared this information with several other LRCs. In compiling these resources, Evgenia used the Australian Medicus site (<http://www.internetmedical.com.au>), which indexes 96 clinical specialties.

CREATING A COALITION OF INFORMATION COORDINATORS:

Renowned among AIHA information coordinators for his work on the Web page for his own institution, ANDREW TOOZIAK (andrew@draco.lviv.ua) from the Neonatology Department at Lviv Oblast Clinical Hospital in Lviv, Ukraine has begun working on creating a Web page to represent all of the NIS information coordinators as a collective association. While still not yet complete, Andrew plans to include information about all of the NIS information coordinators and their LRCs. The site will also include features that will allow information coordinators to post questions and share information with each other. The web page is located at:

<http://www.lviv.uar.net/~nicu/inco/>

Also, the Ukrainian Medical Association in Lviv recently asked Andrew to design a web page for them. This page, which is in Ukrainian, is located at:

<http://www.lviv.uar.net/~nicu/ult>

Another medical web page that Andrew created was for the Lviv Rehabilitation Center "Elita" (Ukrainian, English and German versions) which can be reached at:

<http://www.uar.net/REHA>

Andrew's own recently updated web page for the Neonatology Department can be viewed at:

<http://www.lviv.uar.net/~nicu>

For more information about AIHA's Learning Resource Center project, please see AIHA's web site at www.aiha.com or contact Mark Storey, AIHA LRC project coordinator, at mstorey@igc.org.