QUARTERLY REPORT
September 30, 2004 – December 31, 2004

Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health
TS-0734

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**Introduction**

This report covers the first quarter of Year 4 of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, TS-0734, September 30 through December 31, 2004. This project continues one year past the original funding dates through a no cost extension.

**Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives**

1. We submitted an application for reapproval of human studies to the University of Massachusetts Medical School Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on October 27, 2004 (Attachment 1). The study was reapproved effective December 12, 2004 (Attachment 2). Copies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval documentation were sent to the Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine (ATPM) and to Jocelyn Rankin, Technical Advisor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Information Center, on December 7, 2004.

2. Dr. Elaine Martin, Principal Investigator, and Hathy Simpson, Project Coordinator, met with Dr. Roger Luckmann and Dr. Nancy La Pelle who are serving as expert consultants for the project on October 6 and 20, November 2 and 18, and December 16, 2004. We prepared for our presentation to the American Public Health Association (APHA)132nd Annual Meeting entitled *Improving Access to Credible and Relevant Information for Public Health Professionals: A Qualitative Study of the Information Needs in Communicable Disease Control*. The presentation is based on the findings of the informant interviews at Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). Dr. Nancy La Pelle produced a preliminary analysis of the findings from the second set informant interviews at the Division of Community Health Promotion, Bureau of Family and Community Health, MDPH (Attachment 3). We discussed the findings from the second set informant interviews and compared them to the previous informant interviews with the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control. We also discussed demonstrating some of the identified models of information resources to health professionals in the Division of Community Health Promotion, MDPH, to further determine how their information needs can be met. This work relates to Objective 1: To identify at least three models of evidence-based literature approaches to clinical medicine and review their applicability to the literature of public health; Objective 2: To identify any existing preliminary models or products for assessing the quality of public health literature; Objective 3: To evaluate the models/products for effectiveness; identify their pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses; scalability; usefulness; and Objective 4: To identify a narrow subject area and pilot test it within the models (products) identified for applicability with public health.

3. We submitted an abstract, “Access to Credible and Relevant Information for Public Health Professionals: A Qualitative Study of Information Needs in a State Public Health Department” for presentation at the Medical Library Association (MLA) Annual Meeting in May, 2005 (Attachment 4). This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 as described above.

4. We updated the document, *Internet Links to Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination: Sources and Organization of Evidence-Based Knowledge* (Attachment 5).
Several of these models were demonstrated to public health professionals at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and were also shown as examples at the APHA Annual Meeting presentation. They are also accessible on the project’s Web site at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph. This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication and Web site).

5. Hathy Simpson attended the Massachusetts Public Health Association Annual Meeting, October 14, 2004. She met a faculty member from the University of Massachusetts School of Public Health and Health Sciences who teaches a course on evidence-based public health. The faculty member expressed interest in the project and will use the project’s Web site as a resource for the graduate public health course. This work relates to Objective 7: To design an outreach and training program to increase the awareness of “evidence-based practices” in public health and encourage the use of the web products developed as a result of this study among public health practitioners.

6. Hathy Simpson attended the Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce Steering Committee meeting on October 26, 2004 at the National Library of Medicine (NLM), Bethesda, MD. She discussed the project with Jocelyn Rankin, Technical Advisor to the project, CDC Information Center. The Partners Web site, http://PHPartners.org, is developing topic pages. The identified knowledge domains of public health (http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/knowdomains.pdf) will be used to aid in the development of topic pages. This work related to Objective 1 as described above.

7. Hathy Simpson and Dr. Nancy La Pelle attended the 132nd APHA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, November 6–10, 2004. Dr. La Pelle presented an oral presentation, Improving Access to Credible and Relevant Information for Public Health Professionals: A Qualitative Study of the Information Needs in Communicable Disease Control (Attachment 6). Hathy Simpson was part of the faculty team for the APHA Continuing Education Institute, Public Health Knowledge: Acquisition, Management and Generation on November 6, 2004. She assisted in the hands-on exercises and provided information about the project and evidence-based public health resources. Hathy Simpson met with Dr. Sharon Telleen, Research Associate Professor of Public Health and Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago and expert consultant for the project. They discussed the project and its progress. This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 7 as described above.

8. We met with Dr. Sharon Telleen on November 15–17, 2004 at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Dr. Telleen is working with us to write a paper for publication about our work on identifying the knowledge domains of public health and compiling a list of public health journals classified by public health knowledge domain (Attachment 7). We determined that we would limit the list of public health journals to publications that are indexed. We are using Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory to determine if a journal is indexed in a bibliographic database and/or by an abstracting service. Dr. Telleen provided us with names of public health experts that we could contact to review the journal list. We will also work with librarians at NLM to review the list of public health
journals. Our work with Dr. Telleen relates to Objectives 2, 6 and 7 as described above.

9. We updated the list of public health bibliographic databases and converted the database list from a PDF version to a Web version for faster and easier access. The list of the databases can be accessed at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/dblist.cfm. This work relates to Objective 2 as described above.

10. We created a PDF document of the MLA continuing education (CE) course, Evidence-Based Public Health: Finding and Appraising Relevant Resources. The manual is divided into sections that can be navigated within the document. We posted the course manual and presentations to the project’s Web site at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/mlaclass.cfm. This relates to Objective 7 as described above.

11. We updated the project’s Web site, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph. Additions to the project Web site during this quarter include:
   - List of public health bibliographic databases in Web format, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/dblist.cfm. This list can be access alphabetically at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/dbAaction.cfm?alpha=All, and there is also a link to free public health databases at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/freephdbs.cfm.
   - PowerPoint presentation of identified clinical and public health models of information presented to MDPH, Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination in Clinical Medicine, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/mdph_04.ppt.

The project Web site had been listed as a resource for public health information on National Network of Libraries of Medicine New England Region’s Web site, http://nnlm.gov/ner/publichealth.html. The project’s Web site had 2119 visitor sessions in October, 1976 visitor sessions in November, and 1954 visitor sessions in December, 2004 (Attachment 8, Usage Statistics Chart for the Project’s Web Site). This work relates to Objective 6 as described above.

Preliminary Plans for the Subsequent Quarter

1. Continue to work with Dr. Roger Luckmann and Dr. Nancy La Pelle to determine the information needs and preferences of public health professionals. We will review the data gathered from the informant interviews of staff from the Division of Community Health Promotion, Bureau of Family and Community Health at MDPH and compare the findings to data from the interviews previously conducted at the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, MDPH. We plan to present a summary of our findings to interested participants from the Division of Community Health Promotion at MDPH and receive feedback from them on the identified models of information resources. We plan to present our findings at the MLA and APHA 2005 annual meetings and write a research article for publication on the
study. This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 as described above.

2. Formulate recommendations for effective ways to organize, synthesize, and disseminate information needed by public health professionals to make informed decisions for practice. We will review the findings of the informant interviews at MDPH and examine the previously identified evidence-based models and determine if any of these models or characteristics of these models can be applied for accessing evidence-based public health information. We will send a final report with our recommendations to the CDC and to the ATPM. This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 as described above.

3. Develop a presentation, Access to Credible and Relevant Information for Public Health Professionals: A Qualitative Study of Information Needs in a State Public Health Department, on the project’s findings for the MLA annual meeting in May, 2005. This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 as described above (Attachment 4).

4. Continue to update and post our findings on the project’s Web site, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph including public health journals and associated knowledge domains of public health, the top 25 public health journals by impact factor, public health databases, and evidence-based resources for public health practice. We plan to develop a page on the Web site with links to evidence-based resources available for free online access targeted towards public health professionals. We plan to match the identified public health databases with the knowledge domains of public health and create a drop-down menu of public health databases by knowledge domain on the project’s Web site. This relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6 as described above.

5. Continue to work with Dr. Sharon Telleen, project consultant, on writing a paper for publication about our work on identifying the knowledge domains of public health and compiling a list of public health journals classified by public health knowledge domain. We plan to invite public health experts and health sciences librarians to review the list of public health journals. We will update the list of public health journals classified by knowledge domain and the list of the top 25 public health journals by impact factor. This works relates to Objectives 1 and 7 of the research plan.

6. Match the identified knowledge domains with NLM Medical Subject Headings (MeSH). We will add a “Hints for Searching” section to the project Web site and include MeSH for retrieving published public health literature. This relates to Objective 5: To develop a “Hints for Searching” section on the project’s Web site. This section will include NLM Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) for retrieving published public health literature.

7. Begin to look for other sources of funding to continue and expand this project research efforts past October 2005.

Problems, Risks, Questions, Concerns That Have Impacted Progress
Public Health is a multidisciplinary field ranging broadly across the health care spectrum. In order to develop an evidence-based tool appropriate to public health, it has been necessary to
identify the knowledge domains of public health and the public health literature and databases associated with each domain. These tasks were not part of the original research plan but are necessary to undertake in order to create an evidence-based tool appropriate to public health.

There is disagreement amongst public health experts, associations, accrediting bodies, etc. as to what the knowledge domains of public health should be. Coming to consensus amongst project advisors and constituents has been a difficult, labor-intensive task. However, we feel we have made substantial progress in this endeavor and that it was worth the time and effort spent. The work we have put into this task will ultimately benefit the project outcome.

There are various ways to define “evidence” in public health. Public health evidence may include information from expert opinion, journal literature, books, government and foundation reports, conference proceedings, public health organization newsletters, listservs, and Internet sources. We will need to investigate further what constitutes public health evidence.

Despite these issues, we feel that we have made substantial progress on this project. We have successfully met Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 of the Research Plan and we plan to pursue Objective 5. Now that we are in the process of analyzing the results of the key informant interviews of public health professionals, we expect to make rapid progress in meeting the remaining objectives for this project. Preliminary work suggests the needs are quite varied and more interviews than previous expected need to be conducted in order to derive meaningful results. However, we expect to continue making rapid progress in meeting the remaining objectives for this project.

This project has sparked international interest from Canada, Australia, Israel, and China, and we will be thinking about ways of collaborating with others interested in this topic in the coming year. The challenge will be finding ways to do so, despite the distance. In addition, we will be looking for continuation funding from other sources to continue and expand this project.

Appendix

Attachment 1: Application for Reapproval Application of University of Massachusetts Medical School Human Studies

Attachment 2: IRB Approval, University of Massachusetts Medical School Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Attachment 3: Community Health Promotion Preliminary Analysis


Attachment 5: Internet Links to Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination: Sources and Organization of Evidence-Based Knowledge
Attachment 6: Presentation to the American Public Health Association 132\textsuperscript{nd} Annual Meeting, November 8, 2004. *Improving Access to Credible and Relevant Information for Public Health Professionals: A Qualitative Study of the Information Needs in Communicable Disease Control*

Attachment 7: Draft, Paper for *Journal of the Medical Library Association*

Attachment 8: Usage Statistics Chart for the Project’s Web Site