QUARTERLY REPORT
April 1, 2005 – June 30, 2005

Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health
TS-0734

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Introduction

This report covers the third quarter of Year 4 of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, TS-0734, April 1 through June 30, 2005. This project continues one year past the original funding dates through a no cost extension.

Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives

1. 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 in May and June 2005. We worked on preparing a paper for publication based on the findings of the informant interviews and focus groups with public health professionals from the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and the Division of Community Health Promotion, Bureau of Family and Community Health, at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). The paper will present our findings on how public health professionals currently access information and provide recommendations for the development of an information systems model that would address the information needs of the public health workforce. 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.

2. Hathy Simpson attended the Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce Steering Committee meeting on April 20, 2005 at the National Library of Medicine (NLM) in Bethesda, MD. She discussed the project with Jocelyn Rankin, Technical Advisor to the project from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Information Center. Hathy discussed with the committee the identified public health journals and associated knowledge domains of public health (http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/journallist.cfm) and the list of free online full-text public health journals (http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/freephjournals.cfm). 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 for the Partners website, http://PHPartners.org. This relates to Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication, and website), and 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.

3. The project’s findings and online resources are part of the online tutorial, Public Health Information and Data Tutorial, http://phpartners.org/tutorial/index.html. The tutorial’s primary audience is public health workers and librarians working with public health personnel. The online tutorial went live in May 2005 and was highlighted at the Medical Library Association (MLA) Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas in May 2005. This
relates to Objective 7 as described above.

4. The project’s list of public health journals, 
http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/journallist.cfm, has been listed as a resource for searching for evidence by the Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field in their publication, Guidelines for Systematic Reviews of Health Promotion and Public Health Interventions. The guidelines are available at 
http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cochrane/activities/Guidelines%20for%20HPPH%20reviews.pdf. This relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

5. The project has received interest from the public health community in the U.S. and abroad. We received and responded to inquiries about the project this quarter from the Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field about how to identify public health journals not indexed in MEDLINE. The project’s list of identified public health journals, 
http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/journallist.cfm, includes many journal titles that are not indexed in MEDLINE, but that are indexed in other bibliographic databases including EBSCO, CINAHL, and PsycINFO. The Senior Training and Support Officer from the Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field believes that the project’s list of public health journals is invaluable for helping reviewers determine which journals may be useful for hand-searching to find evidence-based public health information. We also discussed the project and its relevance to evidence-based environmental health practice with a member of the faculty from the Institute for Public Health at the University of New Mexico. This relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

6. We continued to assist librarians at the National Library of Medicine who are working to develop public health filters for PubMed. We suggested public health journals that they could use for frequency analysis to identify medical subject headings (MeSH) and text words and phrases specifically related to public health practice. We also recommended that they review the project’s identified knowledge domains of public health, 
http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/knowdomains.pdf, to help identify relevant public health terms. Other sources for public health terminology that we recommended are the National Public Health Library Thesaurus from the National Health Service, UK, 
http://www.hda.nhs.uk/evidence/thesaurus.pdf, and the Chronic Disease Prevention Thesaurus from the CDC, 
http://basis2.cdc.gov:8901/Webtop/ws/ccdchid/Advanced/resource/Terms?F=major_descriptors&rpp=20. This relates to Objective 5: To develop a “Hints for Searching” section on the project’s website. This section will include NLM Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) for retrieving published public health literature.

7. We updated the document, Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Practice, and created a handout for patrons at the Lamar Soutter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School to promote the identified evidence-base public health resources (Attachments 1 and 2). This work relates to Objectives 1, 2, and 7 as described above.

8. We submitted an article about the project and its research findings, Information Access Needs of Public Health Professionals, for publication in the MLA Public Health and Health
Administration Section Newsletter (Attachment 3). This relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 as described above.

9. We updated the list of public health bibliographic databases posted on the project’s website at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/dblist.cfm and added Health-Evidence.ca as an additional resource for evidence-based public health practice, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/ebresources.cfm. The project’s website, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph, had 2893 visitor sessions in April, 2644 visitor sessions in May, and 2298 visitor sessions in June 2005 (Attachment 4, Usage Statistics Chart for the Project’s Web Site). This work relates to Objective 6 as described above.

10. Our abstract, Enhancing Evidence-Based Information Access to Inform Public Health Practice, was accepted for oral presentation at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting on November 9, 2005 in New Orleans, LA. The abstract can viewed online at http://apha.confex.com/apha/133am/techprogram/paper_108127.htm. This relates to Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 as described above.

11. Dr. Elaine Martin and Hathy Simpson have been invited to speak at the North Atlantic Health Sciences Libraries (NAHSL) Annual Meeting on September 27, 2005. They will participate in plenary session panel: Providing Evidence-Based Public Health Resources: The Librarian’s Role. They will discuss the project and its relevance to the provision of evidence-based public health resources. This work relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

Preliminary Plans for the Subsequent Quarter
1. Continue to work with Dr. Roger Luckmann and Dr. Nancy La Pelle to develop a presentation on the project’s findings, Enhancing Evidence-Based Information Access to Inform Public Health Practice, for oral presentation at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, November 2005, New Orleans, LA. We will also continue to work on preparing a paper for publication on the project’s research. The presentation and paper will be based on the findings of the informant interviews of public health professionals from the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and the Division of Community Health Promotion, Bureau of Family and Community Health, MDPH. 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 continue to review the findings of the informant interviews at MDPH and examine the previously identified evidence-based models and a hypothetical model to 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. Prepare for our presentation: Providing Evidence-Based Public Health Resources: The Librarian’s Role, at the 2005 NAHSL Annual Meeting. This work relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.
4. Continue to update and post our findings on the project’s website, [http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph](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 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 website. 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. We will also formulate searches for PubMed to retrieve free online articles from PubMed Central for each public health knowledge domain. 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 these 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 heath 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 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: Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Practice

Attachment 2: Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Practice Informational Handout

Attachment 3: Article Submitted for Publication in the Medical Library Association Public Health and Health Administration Section Newsletter

Attachment 4: Usage Statistics Chart for the Project’s Website: http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph.