QUARTERLY REPORT
July 1, 2002 – September 29, 2002
Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health
TS-0734

Principal Investigator:
Elaine R. Martin
Director of Library Services
elaine.martin@umassmed.edu
508-856-2399

Project Coordinator:
E. Hatheway Simpson
e.hatheway.simpson@umassmed.edu
508-856-3594

The Lamar Soutter Library
University of Massachusetts Medical School
55 Lake Avenue North
Worcester, MA 01655
Introduction

This report covers the fourth quarter of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, July 1, 2002 through September 29, 2002.

Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives

1. We received unofficial notification from the Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine (ATPM) that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has approved and awarded our project for Year 2.

2. We created a project website. It can be accessed at: http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/. The website describes the project and its objectives, cites ATPM/CDC support, presents up-to-date findings of the project, links to the project’s quarterly reports, and lists the project’s personnel (Attachment 1). Currently available on the project’s website: 1) a list of the top 25 public health journals by impact factor, with links to the homepage of the journal; 2) a list of public health journals compiled from sources from the CDC Information Center, the Healthy People 2010 Information Access Project, MLA’s Core Public Health Journals Project, and ISI’s Journal Citation Reports; 3) a list of public health bibliographic databases, including a list of databases available for free internet access; 4) a table of public health sources and knowledge domains of public health; and 5) identified knowledge domains of public health. Creation of a project website relates to the following objectives of the Research Plan: Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication and website), and 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. We met with Dr. Sharon Telleen, Research Associate Professor of Public Health and Visiting Research Associate Professor, Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, on September 19-20, 2002. Dr. Telleen is serving as an expert advisor for the project. We reviewed the project with Dr. Telleen, identified and reviewed existing sources of evidence-based public health information, and drafted an abstract for a poster presentation at the 2003 Medical Library Association (MLA) Annual Meeting. Our work with Dr. Telleen relates to the following objectives in the research plan: Objective 2: To identify any existing preliminary models or products for assessing the quality of public health literature, and Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication and website).

4. Hathy Simpson, the Project Coordinator, gave a presentation on the project to librarians at the Lamar Soutter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School on September 19, 2002. She discussed the rationale and background of the project, the project’s goals, the process used to meet the goals, examples of clinical evidence-based models, a description of the project to date, and future goals of the project (Attachment 2). This relates to Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database,
5. We met with Dr. Roger Luckmann, Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine, an expert advisor to the project, on August 7, 2002, August 23, 2002, September 6, 2002, September 13, 2002, and September 27, 2002. We prepared for our visit and presentation to the CDC Information Center’s Advisory Committee. We examined various clinical medical models of information dissemination and reviewed their applicability to public health information dissemination. Dr. Luckmann is helping us to prepare evaluative charts that will describe clinical evidence-based medicine models and their applicability to public health. See Attachment 3 for a draft of the evaluative charts. Our work with Dr. Luckmann relates to the following objectives in the research plan: 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, and Objective 3: To evaluate the models/products for effectiveness; identify their pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses; scalability; usefulness; etc.

6. We examined online sources of public health evidence-based reviews. We examined the systematic reviews in health promotion and public health identified on the Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field website, http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cochrane/links/index.htm. We also examined other sources of evidence-based public health information identified by our project consultants. See Attachment 4 for a listing and description of identified public health evidence-based reviews. This relates to: Objective 2: To identify any existing preliminary models or products for assessing the quality of public health literature.

7. We began to match the list of public health journals previously created with the identified knowledge domains of public health. See Attachment 5 for an example of journals associated with the public health knowledge domain, Maternal and Child Health. 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.

Preliminary Plans for the Subsequent Quarter

1. Travel to the CDC Information Center in Atlanta, Georgia on October 16, 2002 to meet with Jocelyn Rankin, the Technical Advisor to the project to review the project and its progress to date. We will give a presentation on the project and the work we have completed so far to members of the CDC Information Center Advisory Committee. We will solicit feedback and consensus from the committee about the identified knowledge domains of public health, public health information dissemination, and potential evidence-based public health models. The visit to the CDC 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.

2. Continue to identify online and print literature associated with the knowledge domains of public health. We are using the previously created list of public health journals that we prepared by combining the lists of top 25 public health journals by impact factor, the most frequently requested journals through the CDC Information Center’s Document Delivery Service, the most frequently cited journals from pre-formulated search strategies of the Healthy People 2010 Information Access Project, and the Core Public Health Journals Project. We are matching each journal on the list with an identified knowledge domain of public health. This 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.

3. Identify public health bibliographic databases associated with the knowledge domains of public health. We will match the previously identified public health databases with identified knowledge domains of public health. This relates to Objective 1 as described above.

4. Review and revise the identified knowledge domains of public health as we match the journals and databases to the knowledge domains. We also plan to add the Centers at the CDC as a public health source to the chart we created to determine the knowledge domains of public health. We plan to match the identified knowledge domains with Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) from the National Library of Medicine. This relates to Objective 1 as described above, and to Objective 5: To develop a set of “filters” for retrieving high levels of evidence within the published public health literature.

5. Determine what specific area(s) or knowledge domain(s) of public health we will focus on for the remainder of the project. After we have matched the public health journals and bibliographic databases to the identified knowledge domains we will know what the available sources of public health information are for each identified knowledge domain of public health. We will use this information to choose a list of potential subject areas of public health for the project and to determine the information needs of public health practitioners within the potential areas of public health. We will solicit feedback/consensus from the CDC Advisory Committee, our project experts, and other public health professionals in order to select the area on which to focus the rest of the project. We will finalize our selection based on this feedback. This aim relates to Objective 4: To identify a narrow subject area and pilot test it within the models (products) identified for applicability with public health.

6. Continue to identify models of evidence-based literature approaches to clinical medicine and review their applicability to the literature of public health. We will prepare evaluative charts that describe the features of the identified clinical evidence-based models. We will identify the characteristics of clinical EBM models and determine if any of these characteristics can be applied to a model for evidence-based public health. This 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.
7. Determine the information needs of public health workers and how they would prefer to access evidence-based public health information. We plan to determine the information needs of public health workers through focus groups, interviews, and/or surveys and questionnaires to state and local public health professionals. This relates to Objective 4: To identify a narrow subject area and pilot test it within the models (products) identified for applicability with public health.

8. Submit an abstract to the Medical Library Association (MLA) for a poster presentation on the project for MLA’s 2003 Annual Meeting in May. 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 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.

9. Start to identify any filters that may exist to identify evidence-based public health literature. For example, we will examine the Healthy People 2010 Information Access Project’s pre-formulated search strategies. This related to Objective 5: To develop a set of “filters” for retrieving high levels of evidence within the published public health literature.

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 is 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 (taking longer than we anticipated). 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, and Internet sources. We will need to investigate further what constitutes public heath evidence.