QUARTERLY REPORT
January 1, 2003 – March 31, 2003
Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health
TS-0734

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Introduction

This report covers the second quarter of Year 2 of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, January 1, 2003 through March 31, 2003.

Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives

1. Our poster presentation abstract entitled “Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Project” was accepted for presentation at the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting on May 4, 2003. 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 of the research plan: 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. We submitted an application to the Professional Development Department of the Medical Library Association (MLA) to develop and teach a course for MLA Continuing Education credits. The course will be a full-day course entitled “Evidence-Based Public Health: Finding and Appraising Relevant Resources”. Elaine Martin, the project’s Principal Investigator, will serve as the primary contact for the course. Instructors of the course will be: Hathy Simpson, the Project Coordinator; Kristine Alpi, the Library Manager of the Public Health Library at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; and Nancy Allee, Director of Public Health Information Services and Access at the University of Michigan. See Attachment 1 for a copy of the Application for Approval. This relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

3. Elaine Martin, the Principal Investigator, attended the National Library of Medicine Public Health Partnership Steering Committee Meeting on March 17, 2003 at the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD. She reported on the project and presented an outline of the proposal for the MLA Continuation Education course, “Evidence-Based Public Health: Finding and Appraising Relevant Resources”. This relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

4. We submitted an abstract for a paper presentation entitled “Identifying Evidence-Based Best Practices in Maternal and Child Health” for the American Public Health Association 131st Annual Meeting, November 15-19, 2003, San Francisco, CA (Attachment 2). This relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

5. We completed identifying examples of clinical models and identifying existing public health models for organizing, summarizing, synthesizing, and disseminating evidence-based knowledge in the medical and public health fields and prepared an evaluative chart of the models (Attachment 3, Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination: Sources and Organization of Evidence-Based Knowledge). We categorized these models into four main groups: 1) Reports of Original Research; 2) Summaries, Critiques and Commentaries; 3) Systematic Reviews, Meta-Analyses and Evidence-Based Guidelines; and
4) Comprehensive Knowledge Bases. For each model we determined the: 1) Internet address, 2) topics covered, 3) format and access information (e.g. “available online by subscription only”), 4) producers and collaborators, 5) inputs (e.g. “systematic review of the literature”), 6) outputs (e.g. “structured abstract with expert commentary”), 7) search options, 8) updating, and 9) issues (pros, cons, and feasibility). This work relates to the following objectives of 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; Objective 2: To identify any existing preliminary models or products for assessing the quality of public health literature; and Objective 3: To evaluate the models/products for effectiveness; identify their pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses; scalability; usefulness; etc.

6. We identified additional public health bibliographic databases and public health databases available for free online access and updated the descriptions and online access information of the databases. See Attachments 4 and 5 for lists and descriptions of these databases. This work relates to Objective 2 as described above.

7. We classified the identified public health journals according to their online access availability and created an alphabetic list, “Public Health Journals: Online Access Availability” (Attachment 6). This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

8. We continued to match the list of public health journals previously created with the identified knowledge domains of public health. This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

9. We updated the Public Health Journals page, [http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/journallist.cfm](http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/journallist.cfm) on the project’s website, [http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/](http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/) We added additional journal titles and online links to public health journals available in electronic form. This work relates to Objectives 6 and to Objective 7 as described above.

**Preliminary Plans for the Subsequent Quarter**

1. 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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (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.

2. 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.

3. 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 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 from our project experts, the CDC Advisory Committee, 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.

4. 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 as described above.

5. Create a list of identified evidence-based resources for public health practice using the evaluative chart we created (Attachment 3). We will review and summarize each resource and provide online access information. The list will be posted on the project’s website. This is related to 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).

6. Create a display and handouts on the project for the Lamar Soutter Library’s Annual Open House at the University of Massachusetts Medical School on April 3, 2003. This relates to Objective 6 as described above and Objective 7 of the research plan: 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.

7. Present a poster presentation on the project entitled “Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Project” at the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting on May 4, 2003. This relates to Objectives 6 and 7 as described above.

8. 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 as described above.
9. Develop a course on evidence-based public health for librarians. We will collaborate with other public health librarians and plan to teach a course at the 2004 MLA Annual Meeting. This relates to the education and training component of our project as stated in Objective 7, described above.

10. Submit a Continuation Application for the ATPM/CDC Cooperative Agreement for the 2003-2004 funding cycle.

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 health evidence.