QUARTERLY REPORT
April 1, 2003 – June 30, 2003
Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health
TS-0734

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Introduction

This report covers the third quarter of Year 2 of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, April 1, 2003 through June 30, 2003.

Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives

1. We submitted the Continuation Application for the ATPM/CDC Cooperative Agreement for the 2003-2004 funding cycle on June 2, 2003. We have met Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 6 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.
   
   Objective 3: To evaluate the models/products for effectiveness; identify their pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses; scalability; usefulness; etc.
   
   Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication and website).
   
   We modified Objective 5: To develop a set of “filters” for retrieving high levels of evidence within the published public health literature. This objective as originally stated has been met by the Healthy People 2010 Information Access Project (http://phpartners.org/hp). The National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the Public Health Foundation have developed pre-formulated search strategies (“filters”) for selected Healthy People 2010 focus areas. Objective 5 has been modified to: To develop a “Hints for Searching” section on the project’s website.

2. We presented a display on the project for the Lamar Soutter Library’s Annual Open House at the University of Massachusetts Medical School on April 3, 2003 (Attachment 1). More than 1200 persons from the community attended the event. This 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.

3. We presented our poster presentation, “Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Project” at the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting on May 4, 2003. (Attachment 2). Approximately 2000 health sciences librarians from throughout the United States were in attendance. This relates to Objective 7 as described above.

4. Our poster presentation abstract, “Identifying Evidence-Based Best Practices in Maternal and Child Health”, was accepted for presentation at the 131st American Public Health Association Annual Meeting on November 18, 2003 in San Francisco, CA. This relates to Objective 7 as described above.

5. Our course, "Evidence-Based Public Health: Finding and Appraising Relevant Resources", was selected for the 2004 Medical Library Association Annual Meeting in Washington,
We hired Dr. Nancy La Pelle as a consultant for the project. Dr. La Pelle has professional experience in consultation and qualitative research including conducting focus groups. Dr. La Pelle will assist in conducting key informant interviews and focus group interviews with public health professionals. (See Curriculum Vitae for Dr. La Pelle, Attachment 3). 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.

We met with Dr. Roger Luckmann, Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health on May 9, 2003; and with Dr. Luckmann and Dr. La Pelle on May 30 and June 19, 2003. We discussed the identified models for evidence-based practice and how to proceed with the next phase of the project. We plan to conduct key informant interviews and focus groups with public health practitioners. We need to find out: 1) what the information needs of public health practitioners are, 2) identify public health workers who access or would like to access evidence-based public health information, and 3) ways they would prefer to access information. Dr. La Pelle contacted workers from the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program and the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program (MTCP) at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). Dr. Luckmann contacted workers from the Communicable Disease Control Bureau at DPH. This relates to Objective 4 as described above.

We created a list of identified evidence-based resources for public health practice. (Attachment 4). We reviewed and summarized each resource and provided online access information. The list will be posted on the project’s website with online links. This work is related to Objectives 2 and 6 as described above.

We updated the list of the top 25 journals by impact factor (Attachment 5). We used the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI)’s Journal Citation Reports Science Edition 2001 and Social Science Edition 2001 to rank journals in the subject category, “Public, Environmental, and Occupational Health” by impact factor. A journal’s impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year. This relates to Objective 1 as described above.

We updated the list of public health journals, “Public Health Journals: Online Access Availability” (Attachment 6). This list was compiled from the following sources: 1) a list of the most frequently requested journals through the CDC Information Center’s Document Delivery Service; 2) the most frequently cited journals from pre-formulated search strategies of the Healthy People 2010 Information Access Project; 3) the Core Public Health Journals Project; and 4) the top 25 public health journals by impact factor. We determined if a journal was accessible electronically. This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

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.
12. We updated the project’s website, http://library.umassmed.edu/cbpph/. Updates to the website include the following: 1) the evaluative chart of identified clinical and public health models, “Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination”; 2) “Sources Used to Identify the Knowledge Domains of Public Health”; 3) revision under “objectives” and “outcomes”; 4) bolder links under “findings”; 5) updated public health journals available electronically; 6) updated public health bibliographic databases; and 7) updated list of the top 25 public health journals by impact factor. During the month of May the website received 950 views (hits) and 334 visitor sessions (those that lasted longer than 30 minutes), and in June the address received 918 hits and 294 visitor sessions. This work relates to Objectives 6 and 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, determining if a journal is indexed in NLM’s Index Medicus, and listing NLM subject headings for each journal. This relates to Objective 1 as described above.

2. Match the identified knowledge domains with Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) from the National Library of Medicine (NLM). We will add a “Hints for Searching” section to the project website and include MeSH for retrieving published public health literature. This relates to the modified Objective 5 as described above.

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. This aim relates to Objective 4 as described above.

4. Determine the information needs of public health workers and how they would prefer to access evidence-based public health information. We plan to conduct structured interviews and focus groups with state and local public health professionals. We will demonstrate some of the identified models for evidence-based practice and present identified public health journals for specific public health knowledge domains. This relates to Objective 4 as described above.

5. Create a poster presentation on the project entitled “Identifying Evidence-Based Best Practices in Maternal and Child Health”, to be presented at the 131st American Public Health
Association Annual Meeting on November 18, 2003 in San Francisco, CA. This relates to 
*Objective 7* as described above.

6. Develop a course on evidence-based public health for librarians. We will collaborate with 
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. The course will be offered at 
the 2004 MLA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. This relates to the education and 
training component of our project as stated in *Objective 7*, described above.

**Problems, Risks, Questions, Concerns That Have Impacted Progress**

We have almost completed matching the list of public health journals titles to the identified 
knowledge domains of public health. Since we began this task the National Library of Medicine 
has released a newer version of the *List of Journals Indexed in Index Medicus*. We needed to 
review the list of journals titles added during 2002 to Index Medicus and review NLM subject 
headings changed in 2003 and make appropriate changes on our combined list of public health 
journals.

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.

Despite these issues, we feel that we have made substantial progress on this project. We have 
met 4 of the 7 objectives of the Research Plan, and have modified the 5th objective. Now that we 
have contracted with an expert focus group facilitator, we expect to make rapid progress in 
meeting the remaining objectives for this project.