QUARTERLY REPORT
July 1, 2003 – September 29, 2003
Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health
TS-0734

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Introduction

This report covers the fourth quarter of Year 2 of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, July 1, 2003 through September 29, 2003.

Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives

1. We met with Dr. Roger Luckmann, Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health and Dr. Nancy La Pelle, expert consultant, on July 2, July 18, and July 31, 2003 to prepare for determining the information needs of public health professionals through informant interviews. Dr. La Pelle is in the process of conducting the key informant interviews with public health professionals from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). We generated a series of questions that Dr. La Pelle is asking the informants. The objective of the informant interviews is to identify the information needs of public health professionals and the most effective ways to organize that information for easy access. See Attachment 1, Script for Key Informant Interviews and Attachment 2, Letter to Key Informants at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This relates to 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. Dr. Luckmann and Hath Simpson, Project Coordinator, met with Dr. Al DeMaria, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at the MDPH, on July 23, 2003. We reviewed the project and our goals for determining the information needs of public health practitioners. The discussion centered on what resources Dr. DeMaria uses to find information, preferred formats of information, and the need to access and disseminate current information to the public, policy makers, and others. Dr. DeMaria provided us with names of MDPH staff that we could invite to participate and be interviewed. This relates to Objectives 3 and 4 as described above.

3. We updated the list of the Top 25 Journals by Impact Factor (Attachment 3). We used the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI)’s Journal Citation Reports Science and Social Science Editions 2002 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 and is an indicator of a journal’s relative importance within a particular field. 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.

4. 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. Descriptions of these databases and Internet links can be accessed on the project’s website at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/alldbs.pdf and at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/freedbs.pdf. This relates to Objective 2: To identify any
existing preliminary models or products for assessing the quality of public health literature.

5. We updated the list of Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Practice with title and Internet address changes. Descriptions and Internet links of these identified resources can be accessed on the project’s website at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/ebresources.pdf. This relates to Objective 2 as described above and to Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication and website).

6. We updated the evaluative chart of the identified clinical and public health models with revised descriptions and Internet address changes. The chart, Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination: Sources and Organization of Evidence-Based Knowledge, can be accessed on the project’s website at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/models.pdf. This relates to Objectives 1, 2 and 3 as described above.

7. We updated the project’s website, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/. Updates to the website include the following: 1) “Evidence-Based Resources for Public Health Practice”, 2) updated “Public Health Bibliographic Databases” and “Bibliographic Databases Related to Public Health: Available for Free Internet Access”, 3) updated “Models of Information Summary, Synthesis, and Dissemination”, and 4) “Top 25 Public Health Journals by Impact Factor” from the 2002 Journal Citation Reports Science and Social Science Editions. During the month of July the website received 1,230 views (hits) and 343 visitor sessions (those that lasted longer than 30 minutes), in August the website received 880 views and 280 visitor sessions, and in September the website received 781 views and 319 visitor sessions. This work relates to Objective 6 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.

8. We had conference calls on July 30 and September 10, 2003 with Kristine Alpi, the Library Manager of the Public Health Library at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and with Nancy Allee, Director of Public Health Information Services and Access at the University of Michigan, to prepare for the Medical Library Association (MLA) continuing education course, “Evidence-Based Public Health: Finding and Appraising Relevant Resources”. This relates to Objective 7 as described above.

9. 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, August 25-29, 2003. Dr. Telleen is serving as an expert consultant for the project. We prepared our poster presentation, “Identifying Evidence-Based Resources for Maternal and Child Health”, to be presented at the 131st American Public Health Association Annual Meeting on November 18, 2003 in San Francisco, CA. Dr. Telleen is working on writing a paper for publication about our work on identifying the knowledge domains of public health and compiling a core collection of online and print resources relevant to public health (Attachment 4). Our work with Dr. Telleen relates to Objectives 2, 6 and 7 as described
10. We updated the combined list of public health journals including recommendations from Dr. Sharon Telleen, subject expert for the knowledge domain, Maternal and Child Health. We updated the list of public health journals associated with the knowledge domain, Maternal and Child Health (Attachment 5). This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

11. We created a table of public health journals and the sources used to compile the journals list: 1) 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) journals from the Core Public Health Journals Project, 4) the top 25 public health journals by impact factor, and 5) journals recommended by public health subject experts (Attachment 6). This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

12. We completed matching the combined list of public health journals to the identified knowledge domains of public health and created a table listing: 1) journal title, 2) public health knowledge domain, 3) Core Public Health Journals Project subject category, 4) Index Medicus journal category, and 5) online access availability (Attachment 7). We are in the process of organizing the list of public health journals in order by knowledge domain and subdomain of public health. This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

**Preliminary Plans for the Subsequent Quarter**

1. Continue organizing the list of public health journals by knowledge domain and subdomain of public health including online access availability for each journal title. The completed list will resemble the list we created for the domain, Maternal and Child Health (Attachment 5). We will also create a table summarizing the number of journals classified in each knowledge domain and subdomain of public health. This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

2. Determine the information needs of public health workers and how they would prefer to access evidence-based public health information. We are in the process of conducting structured interviews with staff from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (see Attachments 1 and 2). After we have collected and analyzed the data, we plan to meet with interested informants and present a summary of our preliminary findings. We will ask for feedback at this time and review selected models of information synthesis and dissemination, public health journals, and public health online resources related to the work of the participants. This relates to Objective 4 as described above.

3. Continue to update our findings: public health journals and associated knowledge domains of public health, public health databases, and evidence-based resources for public health practice. This relates to Objectives 1, 2, and 3 as described above.

4. Present a poster presentation on the project entitled “Identifying Evidence-Based Resources for 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.

5. 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.

6. Update the project website with a drop-down list of public health knowledge domains matched to public health journals and add a “Related Projects” section to the website with links to other projects that research and provide bibliographic information about resources for public health practice. This relates to *Objective 6* as described above.

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

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 are actively working on meeting the remaining objectives. Now that we are in the process of interviewing public health professionals, we expect to make rapid progress in meeting the remaining objectives for this project.