QUARTERLY REPORT

Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health

TS-0734

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Introduction

This report covers the first quarter of Year 3 of the Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project, September 30, 2003 through December 31, 2003.

Adherence and Progress towards Achieving Goals and Objectives

1. We completed organizing the list of public health journals by knowledge domain and subdomain of public health and specified if a journal title is available online (electronically). The list was compiled from the following sources: 1) a list of frequently requested journals through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (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 (Medical Library Association, Public Health/Health Administration); 4) the top 25 journals by impact factor from the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI)’s Journal Citation Reports Science and Social Science Editions (2000-2002); and 5) recommendations from public health subject experts. See Attachment 1, Public Health Knowledge Domains and Associated Journals. 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.

2. We reviewed and revised the Knowledge Domains and Subdomains of Public Health (Attachment 2). This work relates to Objective 1 as described above.

3. 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/all dbs.pdf and at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/free dbs.pdf. This relates to Objective 2: To identify any existing preliminary models or products for assessing the quality of public health literature.

4. Hathy Simpson, Project Coordinator, attended the American Public Health Association (APHA) 131st Annual Meeting in San Francisco, November 16-19, 2003. She attended various scientific sessions related to the project and met with Dr. Sharon Telleen, Research Associate Professor of Public Health and Visiting Research Professor, Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. They presented a poster presentation, “Identifying Evidence-Based Resources for Maternal and Child Health” (Attachment 3). We received several positive comments on the poster and the project and an invitation to submit a paper on the project to the journal Public Health. Following the APHA meeting we had conference calls with Dr. Telleen on December 1 and 17, 2003 to discuss writing a paper on the project for publication in the journal Public Health. We are also working with Dr. Telleen to write a paper for publication in the Journal of the Medical Library Association about our work on the identification of the knowledge domains and subdomains of public health and the compilation of the list of public health journals associated with the knowledge domains. This work relates to Objective 1 as described above 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.

5. The project was re-reviewed by the University of Massachusetts Medical School Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. The study was reapproved effective December 12, 2003 (Attachment 4). Copies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval documentation were sent to the Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine (ATPM) and to Jocelyn Rankin, Technical Advisor, CDC Information Center, on November 25, 2003.

6. On the project’s website we created a drop-down menu of public health journals by major public health knowledge domain so that users can view journals associated with individual knowledge domains or select a journal title by letter of the alphabet (Attachment 5). Public health journals can be viewed at http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/journallist.cfm. This work relates to Objective 6: To develop a set of “lessons learned” and recommendations for developing a “preferred” model (database, electronic publication and website).

7. We updated the project’s website, http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph/. Updates to the website include the following: 1) updated list of public health journals matched to knowledge domains; 2) creation of a new link, “Related Projects”, that links to other projects that have identified information resources for public health practice; 3) revised “Knowledge Domains and Subdomains of Public Health”; and 4) updated “Public Health Bibliographic Databases” and “Bibliographic Databases Related to Public Health: Available for Free Internet Access”. The project’s website has received attention from the international public health community. We received requests for information from the Cochrane Health Promotion and Public Health Field and from the Department of Public Health at the Indiana University School of Medicine. During the month of October the project’s home page received 704 views (hits) and 395 visitor sessions (those that lasted longer than 30 minutes), in November the page received 628 views and 379 visitor sessions, and in December the page received 541 views and 345 visitor sessions. This work relates to Objective 6 as described above.

8. Dr. Nancy La Pelle, expert consultant, conducted twelve key informant interviews with public health professionals from the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). The objectives of the informant interviews include identifying how public health professionals locate information needed for their work; the sources and format of these resources (Internet sites, listservs, newsletters, databases, journals, etc.); and the format of original and synthesized information they would prefer to use. Preliminary results show that public health practitioners desire access to abstracts and full-text journals, and that they presently use e-mail and listservs to communicate with colleagues and to receive information on current public health topics. See Attachment 6, EBPPH Draft Report, for preliminary findings. This work 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.
8. We invited Mary Burgess, Librarian at the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), to do two presentations on information from the NCHS on October 20, 2003. One presentation was given to information health professionals in the New England area and the other presentation was given to faculty, residents, and researchers at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Ms. Burgess provided an overview of NCHS information resources and included information on locating information on the NCHS website. This relates to Objective 7 as described above.

9. We had a conference call on November 20, 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”. We worked on creating a PowerPoint presentation and accompanying handout for the MLA class. This relates to Objective 7 as described above.

**Preliminary Plans for the Subsequent Quarter**

1. We will review the data gathered from the informant interviews of staff at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (Attachment 6) to determine the most effective ways to organize, synthesize and disseminate information needed by public health practitioners to make informed decisions for practice. We will examine the previously identified evidence-based models and determine if any of these models or characteristics of these models can be used to develop a tool for accessing evidence-based public health information. This work relates to Objectives 3 and 4 as described above.

2. 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. We are currently seeking feedback and suggestions for additional public health journals and databases from public health librarians and subject experts. This relates to Objectives 1, 2, and 3 as described above.

3. 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.

4. Continue to 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.

5. Continue to work with Dr. Sharon Telleen, project consultant, on writing papers on the project for potential publication in the journals Public Health and the Journal of the Medical Library Association. This work relates to Objectives 1 and 7 of the research plan.
6. 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 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.

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 health evidence.

Despite these issues, we feel that we have made substantial progress on this project. We have met Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 6 of the Research Plan and are actively working on meeting Objectives 4, 5 and 7. 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.