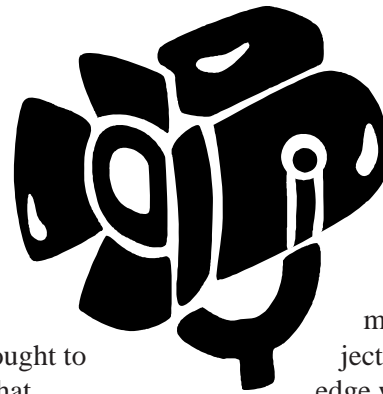


ATPM Member Spotlight

Research Project Highlight



Researchers at the Lamar Soutter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School, have completed the *Evidence-Based Practice for Public Health Project*, which addressed the need for access to quality evidence-based public health information. Project team members consisted of Dr. Elaine R. Martin, Principal Investigator, E. Hatheway Simpson, Project Coordinator, and Project Consultants Dr. Roger Luckmann, Dr. Nancy La Pelle, and Dr. Sharon Telleen.

The need for improved access to quality public health information has been recognized by public health practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and information specialists. Evidence-based medicine (EBM) for clinical medicine involves using the best evidence for the treatment and diagnosis of disease in individual patients. Evidence-based public health (EBPH) involves using the best evidence to develop public health policies, health promotion programs, and interventions for public health practice. In the last decade numerous clinical EBM resources have been developed to assist clinical practitioners find the best evidence for the medical care of individual patients, but few resources are available for population-based public health practice. To explore and address this gap, the project team examined and classified the features of existing clinical EBM models, assessed their potential for improving access to EBPH information, and identified any existing resources for evidence-

based public health decision making.

The project team sought to develop a potential model that could effectively address the unique needs of public health professionals. A major challenge to the development of an information resource targeted to providing evidence-based information to the public health workforce is the great breadth of the public health discipline. The public health workforce may be more diverse than any other group of health professionals and includes practitioners trained in dozens of disciplines, ranging from environmental health to veterinary medicine, from sanitary engineering to epidemiology. Public health activities include health monitoring and surveillance, prevention of chronic and communicable diseases, health promotion, disaster preparedness, and the development of public health laws and policies.

In an effort to develop a potential EBPH model that could effectively address the unique needs of public health professionals, the research team set out to outline and define the field of public health. They examined sources that represented prominent public health associations, government health agencies, national health objectives, essential public health services, public health occupations, public health literature, and library indexes to identify the “knowledge domains of public health”. Twenty major knowledge domains and 155 subdomains of public health were

identified that represent multiple subjects of knowledge within the broad field of public health. The project team also identified an extensive list of public health journals and bibliographic databases including those available for free online access.

The researchers sought to gain a better understanding of the information needs of the public health workforce and undertook a qualitative study to investigate how public health practitioners access information needed for their work, what barriers they face, and what improvements are needed to develop an information systems model for access to EBPH information. The project team conducted a qualitative study to determine the information needs of public health professionals working in the areas of communicable disease control and community health promotion in a state health department. They found that the public health professionals interviewed have a wide variety of needs and use of different information sources depending on the nature of their work. The types of information they used for public health practice ranged from early reports of disease outbreaks needed by those dealing with emerging diseases, to published research reports, systematic reviews, and evidence-based guidelines needed by

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ATPM Fellowship Program

Congratulations to the Fall Graduates

Stacy Holzbauer, DVM, MPH Susan Jernick, DPM, MPH

Kay Hood, PhD, RN

Elizabeth Lowery, MPH
Melanie Pickett, MPH

Carol Redding, MA

Margaret Shih, MD, PhD

Thank you for your contribution to the field of prevention.

We hope that you have gained first-hand knowledge of the U.S. public health system and have become well-versed in the policy issues affecting public health.

Best of luck to you for a rewarding and fulfilling career!

Researcher Spotlight

Continued from page 7

those working on the prevention and control of well-known diseases and health threats. Information resources used by the participants included news resources, listserves, alert services, websites, journal articles, conference proceedings, and email.

The study revealed that public health practitioners face several barriers and limitations to accessing quality information for public health practice. These include feeling bombarded with unfiltered and often duplicative information from listserves, getting irrelevant returns when searching for information on websites and online databases, and limited access to grey literature, systematic reviews, and full-text journal articles. To address these and other concerns raised by the study, the research team developed a

hypothetical model for the delivery and organization of credible and relevant public health information.

An outcome of the project that is particularly beneficial to the public health workforce is the project's website, <http://library.umassmed.edu/ebpph>, which provides free online access to public health journals, databases, and EBPH resources identified by the research team. The compiled EBPH resources are organized by information type and include evidence-based guidelines, systematic reviews, pre-formulated literature searches, and best practices. The EBPH online resources will continue to be updated with funding provided by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, New England Region and the Lamar Soutter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA.

Free copies of Health Professions Educators Conference Proceedings Available

Free copies of the proceedings from the 12th Congress of Health Professions Educators, *Integrating Clinical Prevention and Population Health into Education, Practice and Research*, are available upon request. The Congress was held in June 2005 and co-sponsored by ATPM and the Association of Academic Health Centers. The volume contains papers presented at the Congress, as well as additional materials to assist in widely implementing a prevention curriculum.

Requests for complimentary copies should be directed to gcb@atpm.org.