

Technology and Information Resources

By Mark Storey

AIHA Learning Resource Centers Launched by Mark Storey

As deputy director of a major national hospital, Orozaly Uzakov needs access to information on the latest advances in medicine. That may seem like quite a challenge, considering that Uzakov works in the Institute of Obstetrics and Pediatrics in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Yet by logging on to his e-mail account, Uzakov can instantly retrieve research and other essential information from colleagues half-way around the globe.

"The use of e-mail is one of the primary ways that we receive new information," explained Uzakov. "We are now creating an information resource center and a hospital-wide e-mail system."

AIHA's new learning resource centers will help NIS health care providers like Uzakov obtain essential information. Initiated in December 1995, the learning resource center project began with the training of a group of 32 NIS participants during workshops in Almaty, Kiev and Moscow. This ongoing project will create resource centers at each AIHA partnership institution that will foster improved education and information exchange through various electronic-and Internet-based technologies.

Last November, each of the partnership institutions designated an information coordinator to be responsible for creating and maintaining the center and to facilitate the use of the center by the staff of the hospital. The workshops provided coordinators with electronic mail and Internet training and an orientation about their roles and responsibilities. The workshops also offered the coordinators an opportunity to meet with AIHA staff and regional officers. During the workshops, information coordinators received a package of communications software tools as well as written background materials.

"The AIHA workshops were very useful and necessary, especially those involving medical education," noted Igor Pshenychny, deputy head physician in information systems at L'viv Oblast Clinical Hospital in Ukraine.

Follow-up to the workshops includes an ongoing e-mail-based correspondence training course. Information coordinators receive lessons via e-mail, complete with assignments to return to the Washington, DC office. The course reinforces the skills learned during the workshops and teaches coordinators how to use their new skills to enhance the information resources available at their institutions.

Clearinghouse staff have supplemented the training course lessons with the weekly NISMEDINFO Bulletin, an online publication produced in Russian and in English that is designed to introduce and profile Internet resources on health and medicine.

Plans to improve the AIHA learning resource centers include dissemination of information within partnership institutions. Elzhan Birtanov, anesthesiologist and information coordinator from First Aid Hospital in Almaty, Kazakhstan, for example, has begun giving presentations to hospital personnel regarding the uses of the Internet. Several information coordinators are also developing proposals to receive additional funding from organizations such as the Soros and Eurasia foundations to further develop the centers.

AIHA also plans to expand information resources in the CEE partnerships. Training will be individualized for each country.

Further information about the workshop and the learning resource center project is available through AIHA's electronic mailing list system. Contact Mark Storey, coordinator of technology and information resources, at mstorey@igc.apc.org or 202-789-1136 for more information.

Overview of the AIHA Clearinghouse

The AIHA Clearinghouse is an online information and communications center serving the AIHA partnerships and the broader international health community. The Clearinghouse provides information relating to health and medical issues in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. Clearinghouse subscribers include health professionals from CEE/NIS countries and representatives from international technical assistance and health research organizations.

The Clearinghouse provides information on a variety of topics, including activities of ongoing technical assistance projects and health-related organizations in CEE/NIS, sources of funding for projects and research, translated educational materials and contacts in health-related and other technical fields. For CEE/NIS health professionals, the Clearinghouse also provides a regular source of current Western clinical and health policy information through the NISMEDINFO project.

NISHEALTH home page URL: <http://www.aiha.com> or
<http://alice.ibpm.serpukhov.su/friends/health/health.cfm> (may be a faster link for users in CEE/NIS)

NISMEDINFO home page URL: <http://www.aiha.com> or
<http://alice.ibpm.serpukhov.su/health/nismed/nismed.cfm> (may be a faster link for users in CEE/NIS)

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