

Technology Transforms Learning and Communication

Whether the topic was health reform in Romania or treating the pregnant patient in Latvia, one common thread wove its way through much of the discussion taking place in Budapest: the desire for better technology. Although access and capability vary widely among CEE countries and rural and urban regions, many partners cited e-mail and the Internet as major contributors to their practice, and some, like the Pharmacy Carol Davila in Bucharest, Romania, have even developed their own home page on the World Wide Web.

AIHA's associate director for administration Martin Saggese outlined AIHA's technology and information strategy for CEE partners, which emphasizes the development of e-mail, World Wide Web and Internet capabilities, the creation of learning resource centers at partner institutions, and the introduction of live video conferencing using telephone lines, satellites and the Internet to link up partners across the world.

The goals of this strategy, Saggese told a plenary session of the conference, are to provide low-cost access to global information, provide a cost-efficient, time-efficient alternative to travel, and enhance the sustainability of partner work.

The Bohemia-Nevada health management education partnership is taking these goals to heart, identifying technology as "a means to accomplish our educational ends," said Kathleen Conaboy, assistant dean for planning at the University of Nevada-Reno School of Medicine. "Connectivity" among partner institutions in the Czech Republic would enable multi-site teaching for all levels of students and practitioners, continuing education, telemedicine and international executive training, she said.

University of Nevada partners hope to apply their planning model, which has extended information resources and continuing education from the university to the state's rural areas, to the Czech Republic, and have already assessed the technological capabilities of each Czech partner institution, which in some regions is quite advanced.

For other partners, however, access to technology is a relatively new achievement. Zorica Zorz, head nurse at Zadar General Hospital in Croatia, said her hospital had just received a new computer from AIHA, and was excited about the ability to use e-mail with other European colleagues. "We have no time for letters. We must go with communication fast," she said. "We have some of the same problems, and we can change these problems this way."