

Public Health Outreach Project Description

Title: Improving Information Skills for Georgia Public Health Practice: The PHOENIX Project (Public Health Online Education Necessary for Information expertise)

Staff: Jan LaBeause, Rita Smith, Roxanne Nelson, Stuart Tedders, Sheila Griffin, Cathie McCabe

Organization: Medical Library and Peyton Anderson Learning Resources Center, Mercer University School of Medicine

Date: Original project funding period was October 1998 to September 2000. Because of high personnel turnover, the project has been granted an extension until August 1, 2001.

Objectives:

To improve the ability of local Georgia public health professionals to access and locate current and accurate information relevant to the health needs of the communities they serve. Public health professionals will be trained in the use of the Internet, PubMed, Internet Grateful Med, NLM databases, CDC information services, and the Georgia Division of Public Health website. Classes will be offered at appropriate professional meetings, district offices, and via GSAMS, Georgia's distance learning network.

Target Audience:

The Division of Public Health has nearly 5000 state and county staff throughout Georgia. The target audience is the Georgia public health workforce in the 159 county health departments and 19 district offices. The workforce includes public health nurses, environmental health specialists, public health educators, epidemiologists, and physicians. The target audience also includes public health students currently enrolled in the Mercer University MPH program.

Needs assessment (methodology and results):

A needs assessment survey was jointly developed by PHOENIX staff and the Southwest Georgia (SOWEGA) AHEC, who received a similar grant to train public health workers in their region. The PHOENIX staff sent the needs assessment to 145 county health offices in Georgia, as well as eighteen district offices. One remaining district and fourteen counties were surveyed by the SOWEGA AHEC project. Of the surveys sent out by PHOENIX, seventy-two were returned, a response rate of 44%.

The survey attempted to answer three questions:

- Who has access to the Internet and who does not?
- Is that access actually on the person's desktop or on a departmental computer shared by many coworkers?
- Of those with Internet access, how often do they use the following websites?

National Library of Medicine (NLM)
 National Library of Medicine's MEDLINE
 Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
 CDC WONDER
 Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)
 National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
 Georgia Division of Public Health

Results of the survey indicate that all district offices have Internet access, but only 62.5% of the county departments do. Of those employees with Internet access, 36% have access on their own desktop while the other 64 % must share a departmental computer.

Survey results on frequency of use of online resources reveal that the most popular website for this group is the GDPH (Georgia Department of Public Health) website. However, it is used regularly by only 16% of the respondents. Only 1% reported regularly using NLM's sites, CDC Wonder, or the ASTHO site.

	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
NLM's website	1%	7%	92%
NLM's MEDLINE	1%	12%	87%
CDC's website	9%	49%	42%
CDC WONDER	1%	4%	95%
ASTHO	1%	10%	89%
NACCHO	3%	22%	75%
GDPH	16%	32%	52%

NOTE: "Regularly" used is defined as one or more times per month and "Sometimes" is defined as less than once per month.

Intervention:

A. Classes

Four classes have been developed and taught to Georgia public health professionals and GaIN (Georgia Interactive Network for Medical Information) institutional members. Classes were also taught to Mercer University MPH students as part of an information technology credit course. The classes will also be offered at various locations in Georgia via the GSAMS distance learning network.

1. "Finding and Evaluating Public Health Information on the Internet" - 2 hours.

This is an introductory course in accessing the Internet through a Web browser and the use of search engines or subject directories to locate quality information.

2. "Using PubMed/IGM to Search the Professional Public Health Literature" - 2 hours.

Instruction in using the search interfaces PubMed and Internet Grateful Med (IGM) to search databases from the National Library of Medicine, including MEDLINE, HealthSTAR (Health Services, Technology, Administration and Research), AIDSLINE (AIDS information onLINE), TOXLINE (TOXicology information onLINE), and POPLINE (POPulation information onLINE).

3. "Introduction to Online CDC and Other Federal Resources" - 2 hours.

A navigational tour of the CDC web site with instruction in searching the databases and online publications useful to public health practice. Specifically *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, HazDat (ATSDR'S Hazardous Substance Release/Health Effects Database) and the National Center for Health Statistics are covered. Other online national public health agencies and associations are also introduced.

4. "At Your Service: Exploring the GDPH Web Site" - 2 hours.

Introduction to the wealth of information on the Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) website. This course teaches how to obtain customized data and use the GDPH website to support public health work.

B. Exhibits

Exhibits with online demonstrations have been done at several statewide health professional meetings. Further details are provided in the "Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications" section of this report.

C. Website

The PHOENIX website provides a monthly current literature alert for public health, as well as links to a number of noted public health websites. A problem-based learning tutorial on the use of information resources in public health practice, currently under development, will also be accessible here.

D. Teleconferences

The PHOENIX project hosted two CDC teleconferences on HIV and AIDS, with a total of 32 participants.

E. Summary

To date, 84 health professionals and students have participated in one or more of the classes listed above.

An additional 722 contacts have been made through the various PHOENIX exhibits.

Training and other materials developed:

Class syllabi for each of the four classes.

Exhibit handouts, including resource lists of useful public health websites.

Website (developed as part of project and how maintained):

The website for the PHOENIX project is located at <http://gain.mercer.edu/phoenix>. A summary of its components is below.

<<http://gain.mercer.edu/phoenix/about.asp>> Description of the project and links to related resources.

<<http://gain.mercer.edu/phoenix/education.asp>> Class descriptions, PHOENIX faculty, and recent exhibits. A problem-based learning tutorial on the use of information resources in public health practice, currently under development, will also be accessible here.

<<http://gain.mercer.edu/phoenix/reports.asp>> Reports of PHOENIX activities and links to quarterly reports.

<<http://gain.mercer.edu/phoenix/alerts.asp>> Monthly public health current literature alert.

<<http://gain.mercer.edu/phoenix/resources.asp>> Categorized list of notable public health websites.

The PHOENIX website is maintained by Mercer Medical Library staff. We plan to continue maintenance of the site after the project ends.

Evaluation (methodology and results):

Each class participant completed an end-of-class evaluation.

Participants rated the following items using Likert scale responses (strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, and strongly disagree):

Course Design and Materials

- Content well-organized (Summary: Strongly agree)
- Written materials helpful (Summary: Strongly agree)
- Use of AV/demo's effective (Summary: Strongly agree)
- Length of course appropriate (Summary: Strongly agree)

Instructor(s)

- Knowledgeable about subject (Summary: Strongly agree)
- Well-prepared and organized (Summary: Strongly agree)
- Responded well to questions (Summary: Strongly agree)

Overall, this course

- Met my expectations (Summary: Strongly agree)
- Increased my understanding (Summary: Strongly agree)

In addition, three open-ended questions were included:

- What did you like about the course?
(Summary: Hands-on aspect of classes mentioned frequently)
- What did you dislike about the course?
(Summary: Several participants mentioned that the classes were too short).
- What courses would you like to see offered?
(Summary: Very few responses).

Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Presentations/Publications:

A. Poster Sessions

Rankin JA and LaBeause JH. Public Health Training with PHOENIX. Poster session at Southern Chapter/Medical Library Association Annual Meeting; October 17, 1999. Greenville, SC. 12 contacts during 1.0 hour.

LaBeause, JH, Smith, RB, and McCarley, L. Jubilee in Georgia: Bringing a Feast to the Public Health Table. Poster session at Southern Chapter/Medical Library Association Annual Meeting; October 22, 2000. Mobile, AL. 20 contacts during 1.15 hours.

B. Exhibits

Georgia Nurses' Association (GNA)

- 92nd Annual Convention
October 13-15, 1999
Columbus Ironworks, Columbus, GA
88 contacts during 8.0 exhibit hours
- 93rd Annual Convention
October 19-20, 2000
Columbus Ironworks, Columbus, GA
150 contacts during 8.0 exhibit hours

Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA)

- 69th Annual Meeting
September 8-11, 1998
Savannah Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, GA
163 contacts during 14.0 exhibit hours
- 70th Annual Meeting
September 7-10, 1999
Savannah Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, GA
194 contacts during 14.0 exhibit hours
- 71st Annual Meeting
September 6-9, 2000
Savannah Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, GA
89 contacts during 14.0 exhibit hours

Georgia Rural Health Association (GRHA)

- 17th Annual Meeting
October 29-30, 1998
Brasstown Valley Resort, Young Harris, GA
22 contacts during 4.0 exhibit hours
- 18th Annual Meeting
October 21-22, 1999
Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, GA
16 contacts during 3.0 exhibit hours

C. Presentations

LaBeause, JH and Nelson, RM. Improving Information Skills for Georgia Public Health Practice: The PHOENIX Project. Presentation at the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting; May 10, 2000. Vancouver, BC

LaBeause, JH, et al. Improving Information Skills for Georgia Public Health Practice: The PHOENIX Project. Presentation at the Southern Chapter/Medical Library Association Annual Meeting; October 23, 2000. Mobile, Alabama.

D. Publications

Griffin S. PHOENIX Project to Link Public Health Workers to Web. *Mercer Medicine* Win/Spr 1999. Also available [Inside Mercer](http://www.mercer.edu/publications/insidemercer/mayjune99/pg4.html), May/June 1999, at < <http://www.mercer.edu/publications/insidemercer/mayjune99/pg4.html>>

Partnerships:

The Master of Public Health faculty of the Mercer University School of Medicine are serving as consultants for the development of the problem based learning module, which will be available on the PHOENIX website. We also worked with MPH faculty to arrange inclusion of the four class modules into MPH 600, Information Technology, a required credit course in the MPH curriculum.

The Georgia Division of Public Health contributed staff (Kate Cronin, Michael Coletta) to teach “At Your Service: Exploring the GDPH Web Site.”

Staff at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) information center provided technical assistance on the development of the CDC class module.

The Southwest Georgia (SOWEGA) AHEC received a similar grant to train public health workers in Georgia’s District 8. We have worked cooperatively with them to develop a common needs assessment tool and have shared training materials.

Marketing:

See the Poster Sessions, Presentations, Exhibits, and Publications listed above.

Administrative issues:

Several of the original PHOENIX personnel have since taken new positions, leaving the project short-staffed for a large portion of the funding period.

Scheduling classes via GSAMS and at district health offices continues to be a challenge because of the logistics involved.

Challenges Faced:

Personnel changes mentioned above.

Difficulty in working with professional organizations.

We are dependent on them for successful marketing and scheduling, but communication within the associations themselves has often been a problem. For instance, GPHA members manning the registration booth at this year’s convention were unaware that PHOENIX classes were being offered, or that a shuttle had been provided for participants’ transportation to the computer lab.

Lack of Internet access at many of the county public health offices.

Few district or county offices have the facilities or Internet connectivity needed to host classes. In addition, public health professionals who attend PHOENIX classes have little opportunity to apply new knowledge when they return to offices with little or no Internet access.

Were Project Objectives Met?

Many of the project objectives have already been met, including a needs assessment of Georgia's public health professionals, development of class modules, and participation in numerous exhibits. Other projected activities, such as the web-based PBL module and distance learning classes, are still under development due to personnel turnover. We anticipate that all project objectives will be met by August 2001, the revised completion date of this project.

Sustainability:

The Mercer Medical Library and LRC plans to sustain several facets of the project, including the following:

- Annual updates of web-based PBL tutorial
- Monthly updates of PHOENIX website, including public health current literature alert
- On-site training classes (on a cost recovery basis) at public health district meetings and other public health association meetings
- Continued collaboration with all project partners including exhibiting and participating in professional meetings
- We will continue to teach the four PHOENIX classes to students in MPH 600/Information Technology, a required credit course in Mercer University's MPH curriculum

Anecdotes or Other Observations:

We have found several lessons for success. Although joint planning with professional organizations can be challenging, classes taught at their annual meetings or conferences are a convenient way to reach many members of the target audience. The use of CE credit (pre-arranged with the appropriate organization) for each class is also a valuable way to encourage participation. While hands-on practice is not always possible when teaching information retrieval skills, we found that class participants overwhelmingly appreciated the opportunity for hands-on learning.