

Supercourse Newsletter
June 13, 2004

www.pitt.edu/~super1/
www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/
www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm

Dear Friends,

Back Pain and Broken Wrist

Sorry about the slow delay in sending to you a newsletter. I had a severe case of low back pain. It is amazing the new network of people you find who has low back pain! While being horizontal, it was interesting in reading the LBP literature as 70% of us will be exposed to it. Man and women were never meant to stand. Perhaps we need a lecture on the prevention of low back pain by walking on all fours. In addition, Mita was at the park a week ago and slipped. She put her hand out and suffered a severe compound fracture of her wrist. Mita is essential for the newsletter. But we are all recovering.

Big 2 week period: During a two week period we received enormous publicity. We first published the report on e-recruiting (or "net centric recruiting), then the BMJ wrote a wonderful article about our work. Finally, on my birthday, Ali and Faina with several others in Iran and the US wrote a very nice paper in the lancet showing how we can use the Internet, a telephone, and the Supercourse to develop a very inexpensive system for global education. At the end of this we include the publication. Ali has been great in linking the Supercourse with Iran.

Olympics: We are as fast as Jesse Owens with the Olympic lecture. The lecture on exercise and health developed by Soni has been looked at by a lot of people. Eugene put it up on the web in seconds (what an incredible Russian Internet expert). www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec15661/index.htm We would appreciate if you could examine it and write comments to Soni as to how it would work in your country. We have received some very positive responses, one of which is from the head of the Olympic Committees and others in Iran, Pakistan, Kirabi, Jordan, and several others. The Olympic idea is fascinating and in many ways parallels the Supercourse to break down political barriers in the spirit of competition. The Supercourse team has learned to collaborate together to improve global health, apolitically. The Olympics movement has done the same but in the area of Sport. Soni and I talked with the head of the US Sports medicine group, Ed Ryan. He was wonderful. Soni created a very nice lecture showing how the Olympic ideals fit with the Supercourse ideals. In addition, a really good friend of the Supercourse, Gil Omenn, who is the president of AAAS and at the University of Michigan contacted the chairperson of the board of the USOC who is also at Michigan. The Olympic lecture could have powerful ramifications for health. What if Pele said that prevention lectures should be in the schools of Brazil? The lectures would be in the schools in about 14 nanoseconds. As one person indicated to us, the Olympics have an incredible pull. There are many ways we can collaborate with them. We would love to have your thoughts.

Hispanic Supercourse: Fernando Arena for the National Cancer Institute is considering the building of a Hispanic Network for cancer across the Americas. We have been talking with him about helping to build the network, as we are "human expert scientists", and also to build a Cancer Supercourse on top of it.

Eugene and Julia are on their way to the Crimea. Eugene knows every Internet Café on the way.

Lectures: 1792....fantastic

Best regards from Pittsburgh: Ron, Mita, Faina, Soni, Akira, Ali, Abed, Pele, Denish, Arin, Charles, Kip Kino, and others.

If you would like to come of this list, please send a message to Mital@pitt.edu

Nice work, Ali and Faina!!

Lancet, Volume 363, Number 9423 29 May 2004

Sir--In their 2002 Commentary, Stuart Spencer and David Sharp¹ complimented the quality of the existing standards of medical education in Iran and argued that further development of medical education in Iran needs to be encouraged and supported. Here, we demonstrate the feasibility of bridging public health education between Iran and the USA.

The Iranian Federation of Public Health Schools has 18 schools in the country, of which two are epidemiology training centres. Iran publishes 76 medical journals,² of which six are in English, but none is recognised by the world's major indexing and citation organisations.¹ This situation leads to poor information sharing in the area of medicine and public health between Iran and the rest of the world. The tragic events surrounding the Bam earthquake in 2003 demonstrated the importance of sharing public health information in Iran and worldwide for preventing excessive morbidity and mortality after natural and manmade disasters.

One of us (AA) recently presented a lecture dedicated to the Bam earthquake to students on the chronic disease epidemiology course at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. The audio component of the lecture was delivered over the telephone from Tehran University of Medical Sciences, and a teaching assistant in Pittsburgh operated the PowerPoint slides. The US students had a chance to ask questions about the earthquake.

The interaction with Iran greatly enhanced the students' learning experience and stimulated their understanding of earthquake prevention and Iran itself. To our knowledge, this was one of the first efforts to conduct a distance education lecture between an Iranian instructor and US students. The cost-effectiveness of this approach was remarkable: instead of spending thousands of dollars to bring a faculty member to Pittsburgh, only US\$50 were spent on a long-distance phone call to Tehran.

There is a growing need for better information exchange mechanisms in the area of public health internationally. Supercourse, the online library of lectures funded by the US National Library of Medicine (<http://www.pitt.edu/~super1>), offers one way to exchange prevention information. The Supercourse network has more than 13 000 participants in 150 countries who worked together to establish a library of more than 1700 lectures. The importance of establishing Supercourse networks in the Islamic world has already been discussed.³ Distance education with Supercourse, PowerPoint, and the telephone offers a very cost-effective mechanism for the globalisation of classroom education.

The Bam lecture (<http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec15221/index.htm>) may be used by anyone. In addition, AA (ali_ardalan@hotmail.com) is available to present the lecture to interested parties using the teaching technology discussed above. We thanks Eugene Shubnikov (Novosibirsk, Russia) for his help in preparation of the Bam lecture.

Ali Ardalan, *Faina Linkov, Kouros Holakouie Naieni, Ronald E LaPorte, Eric Noji

Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, School of Public Health and Institute of Public Health Research, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran (AA, KHN); *Department of Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15261, USA (FL, REL); and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA (EN) (e-mail:fyl1@pitt.edu)

1 Spencer S, Sharp D. Bridges to Iran. Lancet 2002; 359: 1960.

2 Latest approved list of journals by Medical Journal Commission, Ministry of Health and Medical Education. http://www.hbi.ir/persian/fa_hbi/fa-commision/contact.htm (accessed Apr 10, 2004).

3 Husseini A, Saad R, LaPorte RE. Health Supercourse to end Arab isolation. Nature 2002; 417: 788.

