



HARBORVIEW MEDICAL CENTER SEATTLE, WA

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Executive Summary:

Harborview Medical Center and University of Washington (UW) Health Sciences Libraries, in cooperation with several other organizations, have developed a Web site dedicated to providing medical and cultural information to immigrant and refugee groups. The Web site, Ethnomed.org, attempts to bridge cultural and language barriers during medical visits by giving health care providers and other groups, immediate access to information on cultural, language, health, illness and community resources for a number of ethnic groups. While EthnoMed was developed and has been reviewed by members of local ethnic-related organizations, avenues also exist for health care providers and other interested parties to update the organization on current treatments, cultural perspectives and resources.

Organization Size: 353 Beds

Program/Initiative Description:

EthnoMed.org is a Web site that features medical and cultural information about immigrant and refugee groups. While the information is specific to groups in the Seattle, WA area, much of the information is of interest and applicable to other geographic areas. The project aims to bridge cultural and language barriers during medical visits. Through EthnoMed, health care providers have immediate access to pertinent information on cultural, language, health, illness and community resources for different ethnic groups. The ethnic groups currently included in EthnoMed include: Amharic, Cambodian, Chinese, Eritrean, Hispanic, Oromo, Somali, Tigrean, and Vietnamese.

EthnoMed is designed to be a community voice and encourages ethnic organizations to communicate with the organization about activities and resources that could be added to the Web site. Profiles have been developed and reviewed by local ethnic organizations, and health care providers have an avenue for sharing new information about treatments, cultural perspectives and resources for updating the Web site information.

Establishment of Program/Initiative: 1994

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Program/Initiative Was Designed to Address

- Significant influx of non-English speaking patients requiring medical care

- Medical professionals did not have the proper understanding and knowledge of their culturally diverse patients

Major Objective: Provide information about culture, language, health, illness and community resources that is directly accessible by case managers and health care providers who see patients from different ethnic groups.

Significant Results: The EthnoMed.org Web site generates 70,000 hits per month

External Partners in the Program/Initiative

- Allen Endowment Funding for Programs (UW)
- The National Library of Medicine
- The National Network of Libraries of Medicine
- The Henry J. Kaiser Foundation
- The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- The Refugee and Immigrant Health Promotion Program
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- The Avon Foundation
- The Nesholm Family Foundation
- Asian American Network for Cancer Awareness Research and Training (AANCART)

Limitations or Problems Encountered

- The project managers have experienced some limitations related to the continuing and often rapid changes in the fields of technology. For example, the managers want to include online video in addition to the audio elements. Determining the most appropriate format to do that while also considering accessibility issues for lower-tech audiences and computer systems is a challenge.
- EthnoMed.org is a service-based program. It has encountered some limitations in providing needed information within its financial constraints.

Estimated Cost of the Program, To Date: \$100,000 per year

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start a Similar Program:

Find and collaborate with programs such as EthnoMed.org toward establishing a coordinated network of related resources and avoiding duplicated efforts. Establish and maintain partnerships with immigrant and refugee community leaders and organizations. Develop Services needed by the communities, Build trust and communication Channels and then develop projects. Programs need to be part of ongoing relationships that have elements addressing real needs of the community members. Programs cannot be projects for the sake of getting short term funding or to provide research subjects for faculty and students.

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