L&D ASSOCIATES' NEWSLETTER

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VERSION 2.0 WEB SITE

L&D Associates is pleased to announce the release of its new web site version 2.0 at www.landd.net. The new design is the result of excellent work by the Devine Universe web design firm in Columbus, Ohio. Be sure to visit the new site and give us your feedback.

LATEST LINKS

The National Library of Medicine is committed to developing intuitive and user friendly research web sites. We highlight one of these sites in each issue of the newsletter.

Go Local is a service for finding local resources for health-related issues. Select an area from the map located on the web site to search for health services and topics in your state or one of interest. http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/golocal/index.html

GRANT WRITING

You are likely to find preliminary grant writing steps to be the most time consuming, yet most vital aspect of the process. Done well, your initial work will improve the writing stage.

PubMed.gov: For many researchers, public health issues are a major concern for healthcare professionals and community leaders. Addressing these needs through grant applications requires researchers to compare their local environment with that of others. The search for evidence based medical literature (EBM) is best performed using the National Library of Medicine's www.pubmed.gov web search tool.

Searching the medical literature for evidence based medicine citations provides the researcher with a tool to make public health decisions which are based on sound data developed from preplanned, comparative studies. EBM literature does not replace expert judgment or clinical experience, but can enhance judgment and experience.

Two features which distinguish EBM literature from other reported medical literature are:

- the COMPARATIVE nature of research and the
- PLANNING/EXECUTION which go into the studies.

EBM literature reports on research which uses human subjects and follows good methodology. Comparative research uses two groups: a control group and an experimental group. Well-planned research assigns subjects randomly and uses "blinding" to mask results from subjects, test administrators and laboratory technicians. In the ophthalmology literature, the practice of "blinding" results is referred to as "masking."

Next newsletter: Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and keywords as search strategies.

EVIDENCE-BASED LITERATURE

Climate change, health, and vulnerability in Canadian northern Aboriginal communities

Environ Health Perspect. 2006 Dec;114(12):1964; **Furgal C**, **Seguin J**.

ABSTRACT: BACKGROUND: Canada has recognized that Aboriginal and northern communities in the country face unique challenges and that there is a need to expand the assessment of vulnerabilities to climate change to include these communities. Evidence suggests that Canada's North is already experiencing significant changes in its climate--changes that are having negative impacts on the lives of Aboriginal people living in these regions. Research on climate change and health impacts in northern Canada thus far has brought together Aboriginal community members, government representatives, and researchers and is charting new territory. METHODS AND RESULTS: In this article we review experiences from two projects that have taken a community-based dialogue approach to identifying and assessing the effects of and vulnerability to climate change and the impact on the health in two Inuit regions of the Canadian Arctic. CONCLUSIONS: The results of the two case projects that we present argue for a

multi-stakeholder, participatory framework for assessment that supports the necessary analysis, understanding, and enhancement of capabilities of local areas to respond and adapt to the health impacts at the local level.

EVALUATION TIPS

Gather Credible Evidence

Persons involved in an evaluation should strive to collect information that will convey a well-rounded picture of the program and be seen as credible by the evaluation's primary users. Information (i.e., evidence) should be perceived by stakeholders as believable and relevant for answering their questions. Such decisions depend on the evaluation questions being posed and the motives for asking them. Having credible evidence strengthens evaluation judgments and the recommendations that follow from them. Although all types of data have limitations, an evaluation's overall credibility can be improved by using multiple procedures for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. Encouraging participation by stakeholders can also enhance perceived credibility. When stakeholders are involved in defining and gathering data that they find credible, they will be more likely to accept the evaluation's conclusions and to act on its recommendations. The following aspects of evidence gathering typically affect perceptions of credibility:

- **Indicators**: Indicators define the program attributes that pertain to the evaluation's focus and questions.
- **Sources**: Sources of evidence in an evaluation are the **persons, documents, or observations** that provide information for the inquiry.
- **Quality**: Quality refers to the appropriateness and integrity of information used in an evaluation.
- **Quantity**: Quantity refers to the amount of evidence gathered in an evaluation.
- **Logistics**: Logistics encompass the methods, timing, and physical infrastructure for gathering and handling evidence.

Reprinted from the CDC Evaluation Web Site.

NEWS IN MEDICINE

If the Normal Distribution Is So Normal, How Come My Data Never Are?
Andrew J. Vickers, PhD
Medscape Business of Medicine.
2007; ©2007 Medscape

How Normal Is Normal?

One of the first data sets that I looked at when I was learning statistics had a number of missing observations. I was told that this was totally normal. I also noticed that the main endpoint followed the bell-shaped curve that is often described as a "normal distribution." This, I was told, was not normal at all; indeed, one of my lecturers became rather excited, commenting, "They say it never happens, but look, here is an example, which just goes to show that you can get a normal curve." I think what they were trying to tell me was that it wasn't normal to get normal data. Nonnormality seemed to be the norm, but I couldn't be sure.

Linking Life to Math

These data look like a pretty good approximation to the normal distribution. From this I would conclude that the *rate* of cancer growth is normally distributed in patients undergoing prostatectomy and that there is some normally distributed tendency to headache in patients with headache disorders.

Read the full paper by clicking here.

Andrew J. Vickers, PhD, Associate Attending Research Methodologist, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact L&D Associates Consulting Group on any of the following topics:

- Public Health Research
- Grant and Contract Writing
- Program Evaluation
- Program Management
- Education outreach
- Rural telecommunications

Mobile: 505-238-0122 FAX: 505-856-2539
E-Mail: information@landd.net

Visit our grant and evaluation blogs through our home page at www.landd.net

Have a safe Memorial Day!