

REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Meeting of The Network Executive Committee and the TUFH (Toward Unity for Health) Advisory Committee in Sicily, May 2002

The overall purpose of this meeting was to explore amalgamation of the two entities. In a document distributed to the voting members of The Network there is a report on that meeting. In the introduction to this document it is stated that “TUFH has been looking for an organizational basis of its activities and has approached The Network as the preferred organization. Because TUFH is not a formal organization the word ‘merger’ does not apply to the intended integration, but rather ‘amalgamation’”.

The Sicily meeting involved 31 participants representing The Network, TUFH, and the World Health Organization. The agreement, reached in Sicily, was put before the voting members of The Network by its Executive Committee. That agreement has the following points:

- to agree with amalgamation, which would imply:
- changing the name of The Network to “The Network: Toward Unity for Health”;
- expansion of The Network Executive Committee for a period of three years with three members to be selected by the TUFH Advisory Board; and
- after three years the Executive Committee will regain its present size.

If the voting membership approves, and there are positives and negatives for The Network as indicated in the letter from Charles Engel and J-J. Guilbert that was also distributed to the voting membership, The Network’s constitution/bylaws would be adapted to the new situation. Furthermore, task forces would be set up to address the following issues: a development office, marketing/public relations, membership criteria, strategic partnerships and the following field projects—women’s health, rural health, multiprofessional training/services, integration of medicine and public health, and the health of indigenous communities.

In a document dated 31 January, 2002, also distributed to the membership, there is discussion of the work ahead. It states in part, “The most important task before us is to further develop the ‘product’ and ‘value added’ we offer our ‘membership’ and our ‘customers’ as a result of the amalgamation of The Network and TUFH.”

In the next issue of this journal we will be able to report the results of the vote.

Report on the BEME Steering Group Meeting, Edinburgh

The purpose of the BEME (Best Evidence in Medical Education) meeting in Edinburgh, 30 November to 1 December 2001, was the following:

- review the structure of the BEME collaboration;
- finalize and circulate the documentation relating to systematic reviews;
- prepare a document on how to search for evidence and hold training sessions;
- develop a taxonomy of medical education;
- search funding for BEME;
- the promotion, education and dissemination group chairperson prepared a draft for consideration by the executive committee; and
- a meeting of the BEME executive committee was held in early 2002

Visit the BEME website: <www.bemecollaboration.org/aboutbeme.htm>.

PBL Information

If there is anyone who wants to get additional information on problem-based learning (PBL), there is an e-mail address that might be of interest. It is: <pbl@jiscmail.ac.uk>. For example, a workshop was held in the UK in July that addressed the issues surrounding assessment of PBL. This PBL approach goes far beyond health professions education to such areas as English literature and law.

For more information on PBL, you can also visit the PBL website of the Maastricht University at: <www.unimaas.nl/PBL>.

An Electronic Journal about Rural and Remote Health (RRH)

Paul Worley is the editor of a new electronic journal with the express purpose of promoting approaches to rural and remote health. Dr. Worley has had some of his articles published in *Education for Health*. This new electronic journal is international in its orientation and is peer-reviewed. It addresses issues of education, policy, research, and practice. To both readers and authors it can be accessed at no charge. Dr. Worley's philosophy is very inclusive and he wants to reach out and have the journal be of help to those that have similar goals.

In Dr. Worley's words:

RRH is a new, entirely web-based, international academic journal that aims to provide a peer-reviewed evidence base for rural and remote health practice, research, education and policy. There is no charge for either contributors or readers of the journal. The journal is employing a writer to assist interested authors who are not confident in writing an academic paper, or whose first language is not English. Log on to <http://rrh.deakin.edu.au> to see the range of articles and editorials already published and contribute to the debates and action we hope these articles will prompt. For example, the recent editorial on the ethics of international recruitment of doctors may cause you to reflect on your own country's policies. Contact the Journal Manager, Jenny Bigelow, via the website if you are interested in making a difference to the health of rural and remote communities through the work of this journal.

Rural and Indigenous Health: The Formation of National and International Networks

For several reasons The Network is very interested in helping those that are concerned about rural and indigenous health. Dr. Arthur Kaufman, MD, PhD, Secretary General of The Network, contributed the following:

At the recent WONCA Rural Health conference in Melbourne, Australia, held May 2002, an important role was played by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), whose president is Dr. Ian Wronski, Dean of Faculty at James Cook University in Townsville, Queensland. With national funding, most of Australia's health science schools now have substantial rural programs and strategies for linking them into a network where best practices and strategies can be shared as a palpable need.

Public funding for health professions schools to bolster their rural health focus has also emerged in Canada. For example, innovative rural programs are found at the University of Western Ontario, a rural campus is planned for the University of British Columbia, and a new, rurally-oriented medical school will soon accept its first class in Northern Ontario. Dr. Carl Whiteside, from the University of British Columbia, is pulling together an informal consortium of rurally-oriented Canadian academic health centers.

The Network, building upon these emerging national rural health initiatives, has created an interest group and listserv for Network members (including representatives from these Australian and Canadian institutions) to share issues and ideas about rural health. As the new

Network website is developed <www.the-networktufh.org>, a “Rural Health” component is being envisioned.

In parallel with these developments, there is a growing interest in developing a Network interest group on Indigenous Health. Academic health institutions in the Network from North, Central and South America, from Australia and Canada have expressed interest in promoting this interest group in the face of growing international concern about health disparities in these populations. An important effort is being led by Jacinta Elston, Associate Professor of Indigenous Health, James Cook University, who is spear-heading the International Indigenous Health Network (INIHKD), and The Network has offered to join up with the INIHKD effort. (A website is under construction.)

Recognizing the important role national and international networks play in addressing rural and indigenous health issues, The Network’s planned 2003 annual meeting in Australia will likely focus upon these two issues.