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## THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE: SERVING A VITAL ROLE IN AMERICAN HEALTH CARE

The Medical Library Association (MLA) and the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (AAHSL) recognize the important role of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) in supporting better patient care, biomedical research, education, health information technology, and public access to high quality health information in the United States. NLM's invaluable, free electronic information services are accessed more than two billion times a year by medical professionals, students, researchers, and the public, helping to advance scientific discovery and accelerate its translation into new therapies, improve medical care and lower its costs, and promote public health.

- NLM's PUBMED/MEDLINE (<http://www.pubmed.gov>), the world's premier online bibliographic database, provides access to the extensive global clinical and research journal literature in a quick and easy interface. For more than 10 years, PubMed/MEDLINE has afforded anyone with access to the Internet the opportunity to tap into the vast resources of NLM.
- NLM's PUBMED CENTRAL (<http://www.pubmedcentral.gov>) digital archive provides the public, clinicians and researchers with free online access to a growing collection of full-text biomedical journal articles. It now contains almost 2 million full text articles and totals 20 million downloads per month. Thanks to the Congressionally-mandated NIH Public Access Policy, articles that report results from NIH-funded research are being added to PUBMED CENTRAL, making it an even more valuable resource.
- NLM's "Partners in Information Access" (<http://www.phpartners.org>) program is designed to improve the access of local public health officials to information needed to prevent, identify, and respond to public health threats. With nearly 6,000 members in communities across the country, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine is well-positioned to ensure that every public health worker has the electronic information services that can help to protect the public's health, given appropriate resources to support outreach efforts.
- NLM's ClinicalTrials.gov database (<http://www.ClinicalTrials.gov>) provides information on more than 87,000 U.S. and international trials of treatments for a wide range of diseases. In response to recent legislation, NLM expanded the system to accept information summarizing trial results, including adverse events. Results of more than 1500 recently completed trials have been added to the database, expanding the set of NLM information resources that contribute to the conduct and dissemination of comparative effectiveness research.
- NLM's consumer Website, MedlinePlus (<http://www.MedlinePlus.gov>), offers trusted information on more than 800 health topics. NLM recently launched Mobile MedlinePlus to deliver the same high-quality and respected consumer health information to mobile devices. Together, with the Genetic Home Reference and consumer oriented toxic substance information services, MedlinePlus offers the general public extensive, authoritative health information for a wide range of health concerns.

- **NLM's genetic databases are accessed millions of time per day.** They organize and make accessible the volumes of data that are needed to detect associations between genes and disease and to translate that knowledge into better diagnoses and treatments. The new Sequence Read Archive is one of the fastest growing biological databases in history, with a growth rate of about one terabyte per month. The database of Genotypes and Phenotypes (dbGaP) continues to grow as it serves as the public repository for data from genome wide association studies (GWAS) supported by NIH and others.
- **NIH MedlinePlus quarterly magazine, now in its third year, puts into doctors' offices and shares with the public trusted health information from NIH.** Launched in September 2006, with assistance from Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Representative Ralph Regula (R-OH), the magazine now has readership of 5 million nationwide. Working with the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, NLM, NIH, and the Friends of NLM have developed a Spanish version, *NIH MedlinePlus Salud*.
- **NLM plays a critical role in advancing ongoing efforts to spur adoption and meaningful use of health information technology.** NLM supported much of the seminal research on electronic health records, clinical decision support, and health information exchange. As the HHS coordinating body for clinical terminologies, NLM supports the development, maintenance, and dissemination of key standards for interoperable electronic health records.
- **MLA and AAHSL are pleased that NLM has established a Disaster Information Management Research Center, as recommended in its Board of Regents' Long Range Plan for 2006-2016.** The Center expands NLM's capacity to contribute to disaster management research and to ensure effective use of libraries and librarians in disaster planning and response. Within a week of the Haiti earthquake, NLM launched a Health Resources for Haiti page, with information in English and Haitian Creole. Working with libraries and American publishers, NLM made available free full-text articles from hundreds of biomedical journals and reference books for medical teams responding to the disaster.
- **MLA and AAHSL see a clear role for NLM and the nation's health sciences libraries in disaster preparedness and response activities.** As part of the Bethesda Hospitals' Emergency Preparedness Partnership, NLM is developing systems to help track patients, capture and exchange patient data among multiple hospitals, and locate missing persons during a disaster. Early results of this work were modified for use to assist in reunifying family members in Haiti. Relief personnel were able to rapidly submit photographs and information about located people via computer, cell phone, or a specialized iPhone application developed by the NLM and to search information submitted to other person finder systems.
- **NLM plays a critical role in preserving the world's largest collection of medical books, journals, scientific databases, and other digital information for health professionals and the public.** The Library's current facilities are inadequate for housing its expanding collections, databases, and systems and the people required to meet its ever increasing assignments. MLA and AAHSL urge Congress to support the need for additional physical facilities for NLM to carry out its critical national responsibilities.

***For fiscal year 2011, MLA and AAHSL urge Congress to continue its commitment to the National Institutes of Health and the National Library of Medicine by increasing funding levels 12 percent to \$35 billion for NIH and \$402 million for NLM.***

MLA is a nonprofit, educational organization with approximately 4,000 health sciences information professional members worldwide. Founded in 1898, MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public.

AAHSL is composed of the directors of the libraries of 116 accredited U.S. and Canadian schools as well 28 associate members. AAHSL's goals are to promote excellence in academic health sciences libraries and to ensure that the next generation of health practitioners is trained in information seeking skills that enhance the quality of healthcare delivery.