

Supercourse Newsletter
August 21, 2003

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

Dear Friends,

Zoom, zoom, zoom

The end of the summer for the Supercourse has led to enormous growth to our group. We now have over 10,300 members from 151 countries interested in telepreventive medicine. This must be put into context, as WHO has 13,000 employees, less than 1000 involved in training or the Internet, CDC has 8,500 employees, with less than 500 involved in training or the Internet. The Supercourse faculty is cornering the market.

Eugene just got back from a months tour of the Ukraine, and he reports that we have now 1401 lectures. Also, the Golden lecture has reached 131 countries. We are an amoeba, going from country to country.

We celebrated at our favorite India Restaurant. We will try to post a picture, but we may have broken our camera!

Battle of the Poets: We have had several people send in remarkable poems that relate to the Supercourse. Our reality contest now is between Rumi, a wonderful Turkish passionate poet, and Tagore who we have heard quite a bit from as Arin loves him (we love both!!). During the next few weeks we will send to you some more prevention poetry as several others have sent to us wonderful works.

"If nobody heeds your call and accompanies you,
then you go forth alone.
Even if everyone dares not utter a word,
Even if everyone else looks the other way,
Even if everyone is afraid,
Be brave enough to speak what is in your heart, and say what you have to say!
If no one holds up the lamp on the way
If everyone shuts their doors on your face on a dark stormy night
Kindle your own lamp in your heart
Tread with bleeding feet, and move on your way!..."

Rabindranath Tagore, brought to us by Arin Basu

Let yourself be silently drawn
by the stronger pull of what
you really love.

Rumi, sent by sandi pope

Aren't these great!!! We are on a mission

SuperGooglization:

Wendy, Arin, thanks so much: A few months ago Arin sent us code so that we could do Google search in the Supercourse. Wendy then did a fantastic job in implementing this. On the front page of the Supercourse course you can now search within the Supercourse. Thus if you want to find all the slides that talk about diabetes, just put diabetes into the search engine, and bang...you got all the slides coming to you. Isn't that fantastic???

Epidemics of Ignorance

Dr Denish Moorthy sent to us and the grand challenge his perspective of the importance of Teleprevention. It is a moving, wonderful, academic, passionate view of what we 10,000 are doing. Please read it, you will love it.

My dear friends and colleagues,

I seem to have been only like a small boy playing on the sea shore, diverting myself in now and then, finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than the ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me. *Sir Isaac Newton, Physicist, Mathematician, philosopher, above all a "Scientist"*

True ignorance is not the absence of knowledge, but the refusal to acquire it. *Sir Karl Popper Cabinet maker, School teacher, Physicist, philosopher, and a "Scientist"*

"As we enter the digital decade, the opportunities before us to drive innovations are immense. This presents a unique role for the government of India to create a vibrant knowledge based economy that encourages innovation and is built on deep partnership..." *William (Bill) H. Gates*

India has a population of over 1000 million. It was always thought that the mass media of television and radio was the best means to reach a population of that considerable size. In the field of public health, apart from the mass media of television and the radio, we now have an

added power to reach a part of the 1000 million population. The Internet. Even though the Indian net penetration is only about 3 million, there lies ahead of us a challenge - how to combine the tools of the communications revolution and innovations in learning with the dramatic expansion in knowledge resources to improve the health of all people, particularly the world's poor. The answer lies not in the curative services, but in prevention. Combining the best of prevention information with the Information technology revolution and the traditional networks of information dissemination in India, and the world, to equitably reach out to everyone, is THE CHALLENGE.

I work in the field of Iodine Deficiency Disorders elimination. For the last 41 years, the Government of India has been implementing a Salt Iodization program. We had a simple solution to eliminate a serious problem like iodine deficiency – iodised salt; we had the capacity to produce iodised salt for the whole country, and more; still, we now only have an adequately iodized salt coverage of 49%. Why hasn't Universal salt Iodization worked? Our recent surveys all over the country found that one of the key reasons that it was not working was the lack of information about the benefits of the consumption of iodised salt in the general population; What we have growing here, and in many places around the world, is an epidemic of ignorance; an epidemic that threatens to undermine the sustainability of public health programs. Ignorance arises not because the people refuse to accept health education; the ignorance is due to the non-availability of the latest practical simple prevention information.

This is where the field of telepreventive medicine will play a major role in the not so distant future. Traditionally, didactic teaching in the classroom has always been a part and parcel of transmission of prevention information in the developing countries. What telepreventive medicine adds to this is in terms of connectivity; the traditional networks will be infused with the latest in prevention from experts all around the world who have gained this knowledge through experience. There is no greater teacher than experience. Soon, drawing on my experience in India, the Ministry of Health in Timor Leste will be able to develop a Salt Iodization program, suited for their country, avoiding the drawbacks that occurred in India's program. A health worker in Benin will be able to implement the latest intervention to alleviate the burden of non-communicable diseases, working on information obtained from Thailand. The business world is turning into one global marketplace and it is only fair that the public health world meet together in one place – cyberspace.

Sir Karl Popper's work in the philosophy of science brought to the fore the need to account for and to promote the growth of knowledge. He believed that men like Sir Issac Newton (vide above) made possible a tremendous growth of knowledge by championing bold ideas and subjecting them to severe attempts at refutation, an attempt at charting "the great ocean of truth". It is a theory's openness to empirical refutation that makes it scientific. If a refutation is avoided at all costs then one gives up science. On the other hand, if a theory is abandoned too easily in the face of apparent refutation, then the theory has no opportunity to show its strengths, which may only become apparent in the course of debate. Telepreventive Medicine is a bold scientific idea that can be implemented globally, regardless of the level of technological advance in any country. That is because the success of Telepreventive Medicine is in the hands of the people, reaching out to touch others with knowledge.

Bill Gates in one of his speeches mentions - "Part of the idea of the role of technology is to allow people to pursue curiosity and allow people to work together in very individualized ways. Depending on the topic, the way that someone is motivated to be interested in that topic, the things that really bring it to life for them, or make it understandable to them vary a lot from student to student. And so having all of the information out there on the Web, the latest information, and new ways of collaborating around that really can make a huge difference. Part of the vision, of course, in education is connecting everybody together."

In India, the people exposed to the concept of “Telepreventive Medicine” currently number around 200. These key people are mainly placed in Academia and non-governmental organizations. As we are writing to each other, these 200 people, with access to Telepreventive Medicine, and an ideology rooted in preventive health, are each teaching 100 other people about the Supercourse lectures and Telepreventive Medicine. That amounts to 20000 people being inoculated against the epidemic of ignorance!! The greatest advantage that Telepreventive medicine gives us is that it is a low cost, high output technology; the greatest investment is in an area that India has no lack of – human resources. People connected, working together, people telling other people about prevention – imagine if the power of the Internet technology were harnessed to combine with the power of empowered humans – the outcome in measurable terms would be immense. Prevention information can reach more than the 100 million, which is the current estimate of Internet users in India by the end of the current decade.

Now that is your Grand Challenge!

Thank you for your time! Dr Denish Moorthy denishm@hotmail.com

Best regards from Ron, Mita, Arin, Eugene, Sandi, Akira, Faina, Abed, Rabindranath Tagore EunRyoung Eysenbach, Soni, Abed, Rania, Tomoko, Wendy, Rashid, Ellen, Denish, Suze, Rumi, Julia

If you would like to come off this list, please send a message to super2@pitt.edu