RESEARCH PLAN
Consumer Health Education and Promotion Project

A. Specific Aims

The aim of the consumer health education and promotion project is to promote the Van K. Smith Community Health Library’s (VKSCHL) services and resources to the public and thereby improve the public’s access to health information. Educating the public about online health information resources of MEDLINEplus, PubMed, Gale’s Health & Wellness Resource Center, and the Consortium of Ozarks Libraries Catalog (Coolcat, found at http://coolcat.org) is a primary focus. Relationships with area public libraries and their clientele will be strengthened as VKSCHL holdings are added to Coolcat in the first half of 2002. This project, while serving the local mission of the VKSCHL and St. John’s Health System, also fulfills the mission of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine to improve, “…the public’s access to information to enable them to make informed health decisions about their health.”

B. Background and Significance

The Van K. Smith Community Health Library is unique in the region as a library specifically targeting health information for the consumer. The southwest and central regions of Missouri contain many rural communities. In, Health, United States, 2001, produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it has been concluded that access to health care resources varies by the level of urbanization. Rural communities have higher rates of adverse health behaviors and conditions. The VKSCHL has services that can be critically important to the health status of these communities. Unfortunately, little promotion of the VKSCHL has occurred in the past and it is a community service that is not widely known in the region. In July 2000, the VKSCHL was placed under the administration of librarians and educators. Under new leadership, the VKSCHL has been strengthened, completely upgraded and further prepared for service to

---

1 The nearest consumer health library is Mercy Health Resource Library in Joplin, Missouri, part of St. John’s Regional Medical Center. Joplin is approximately 74 miles west of Springfield. Note: St. John’s, Joplin and St. John’s, Springfield are not affiliated organizations and serve differing populations.

the community. Promoting the VKSCHL’s quality staff, rich resources and great service is paramount. Access to health information has become an important part of people’s lives, and the VKSCHL is poised to provide quality health information to the public.

The Van K. Smith Community Health Library is a consumer health library that has existed as a service to patients, family members, and members of the community since 1991. As a part of St. John’s Health System in Springfield, Missouri, the VKSCHL provides access to up-to-date health information in all disciplines. Staffed by a professional librarian, the collection consists of over 3,000 books, over 500 audiovisuals, and subscriptions to nearly 100 periodicals. Posters, models, anatomical charts, and a pamphlet collection of over 600 titles are also available. The library also has many traditional medical reference texts and partners closely with the Medical Library at St. John’s. Computer workstations are available to patrons for research and all computers provide access to the Internet and other electronic resources. As an outreach service of St. John’s, the resources and services of the Community Health Library are primarily provided free of charge. The majority of the library’s collection circulates. Patrons need only be 18 years old and provide proof of a current address to borrow materials. A local or county address is not required. This flexible circulation policy makes the library available to family members visiting local patients and those who travel to receive treatments. The library accepts inquiries in person, by mail, phone, or fax and will readily mail information to patrons. Although the VKSCHL’s primary service areas include southwest and central Missouri plus northwest Arkansas, inquiries have been received from patrons as far away as New York and Oregon.

C. Preliminary Studies/Progress Report

The preliminary promotional plan targets specific user populations: Health professionals (physicians, nurses), clinics (local and regional), and the community (organizations, groups). Early efforts are now underway to inform internal customers and referral sources (i.e. nurses and physicians) about the VKSCHL. Promotion and education for the community is the basis of this grant proposal and is scheduled to take place during 2002 with follow-up and evaluation occurring during 2003. St. John’s Health System encompasses health care facilities spanning over 30 counties in southwest and central Missouri, as well as portions of northwest Arkansas. This large geographical area provides an optimal setting for the project. A list of community groups to target with consumer health promotion and education efforts is provided for your consideration. A map of the primary St. John’s service area is provided on the last page of the Research Plan.

During the development of the VKSCHL’s promotional plan in 2001, promotional items were also planned and created. These include a new brochure and posters (small: 8 1/2” x 14” and large: 11” x 14”) for the VKSCHL. An “RX for
Information” notepad was also developed for physicians who wish to refer patients to the library. All promotional items have been printed and they were available for initial distribution beginning in February 2002.

D. Research Design and Methods

The consumer health education and promotion plan involves making contact with community groups, arranging and developing a presentation based on a group’s specific interests and/or requests, travel to a location, presentation of an educational program using multimedia, and distribution of promotional literature. Each site visited will be provided with an evaluation form to complete regarding the program’s content and presentation. Each site will also receive follow-up contact from the VKSCHL after the presentation.

1. Proposed groups to target for education and promotion

Educational Organizations
Early childhood education (headstart programs, day care centers)
Primary and secondary education (nursing staff, health classrooms, libraries)
Post-secondary education (allied health programs, nursing programs)
Libraries (public and academic)

Exercise and Recreation organizations
Health clubs, YMCA’s

Government Services
Health departments, parks & recreation departments

Health care
Clinics, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, hearing centers, pharmacies, podiatrists, weight control centers

Religious organizations
Churches, places of worship

Retail businesses
Children’s apparel, health food stores, groceries, salons

Senior Centers & Care
Nursing homes, assisted living, adult day care

Social Services/Charitable Organizations
Salvation Army, Christian Foundation, Crosslines, Ronald McDonald House, Southwest Missouri Office on Aging, Council for the Blind, Goodwill, American Red Cross, support groups

Local chapters of national organizations
2. Education and promotion presentation content

The content of the educational presentation will be developed and customized based on information received from the groups and organizations. It is the goal of each presentation to make the information as relevant as possible to each group. At a minimum, each presentation will include the following content.

a. Introduction to the Community Health Library’s services, collection content, research assistance and electronic resources

b. A multimedia presentation detailing online consumer health information resources. A laptop computer and LCD projector will be utilized. The presentation will include a description and demonstration of the services provided by:
   1. National Library of Medicine, specifically MEDLINEplus and PubMed
   2. National Institutes of Health
   3. Consortium of Ozarks Libraries Catalog (COOLCAT), a partnership with the Springfield-Greene County Library to provide public access to the VKSCHL collection.
   4. Van K. Smith Community Health Library’s access to the Gale Health & Wellness Resource Center
   5. Subject-specific sites that may pertain to the audience

In some situations, depending on the facilities available, it may be possible to incorporate a hands-on aspect to the planned multimedia presentation. Whenever possible, program participants will be given the opportunity to gain direct experience in the use of online resources.

c. Distribution of promotional literature

Several promotional items have been developed for distribution.
1. A brochure briefly describing the library and its services
2. Posters suitable for framing or display on bulletin boards
3. Pathfinders and other subject-specific information

3. Explanation of budget and expenses requested

The key components of this consumer health education and promotion project requiring funding are personnel, travel, equipment, and promotional resources.

Personnel
The VKSCHL is open 42.5 hours per week to serve patrons. The staffing at the VKSCHL is limited to one full-time librarian with assistance from volunteers totaling 6 hours per week. Because of the limited staffing, this grant application includes budgeting for relief staffing during promotion trips. The VKSCHL is
committed to maintaining quality service to our current patrons while educating new patrons. Appropriate relief staffing must be available to insure continued quality service.

Travel
Funding for travel to and from the presentation locations is included in the budget of this grant application. All travel will occur by car and is not expected to involve overnight travel expenses. Mileage expenses were estimated using a rate of 36.5 cents per mile, which is the current reimbursement rate used by St. John’s Health System.

Equipment
A key component to this project is the use of appealing and high-quality multimedia presentations. A portable LCD projector, projection screen and cabling is required to make this possible. A laptop and appropriate software are already available. The acquisition of the projector and screen will enable a quality demonstration of online consumer health resources available to the public.

Promotional Resources
Should the demand for promotional posters be greater than previously anticipated, another quantity of posters may need to be printed. The existing artwork and design will be reprinted.

CONCLUSION
This grant proposal involves promoting and educating the services and resources of the Van K. Smith Community Health Library. The project will target areas of southwest and central Missouri, as well as a portion of northwest Arkansas. A multimedia presentation will demonstrate several online health information resources that are available to the public. The VKSCHL is a unique resource in the region. It has tremendous potential to reach a broad range of users, both rural and urban, and have an impact on the health status of these communities. Funding from this Impact Grant will be a significant determinant of this project’s success.