



Mobile Books for Nursing and Health: Merck, Elsevier Science and ICN Team Up For Better Health

Lynn Nabors Gorrell

Communications Officer
International Council of Nurses
3 place Jean Marteau
1201 Geneva
Switzerland



Improving health service depends to a great extent on continually improving the knowledge and training of health personnel. Nurses working in remote and difficult areas often have poor access to up-to-date, basic health and medical information and training. With the help of the Merck Foundation and Elsevier Science, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) has launched the ICN Nursing Mobile Library aiming to help close this gap between the need for information and its availability.

The nursing mobile library, housed in a transportable trunk resilient to moisture, insects and hard knocks, delivers state-of-the-art medical information to thousands of nurses in remote clinics and health centres in developing countries. The libraries deliver validated information on family and community health, disease prevention, health promotion, and health services management and training. Each unit contains more than 80 titles, covering topics from surgery and anesthesia to how to look after a refrigerator and manage a health center store.

The first libraries were shipped to Kenya, Zimbabwe and Botswana in early 2002. Merck & Co. Inc. funded the start-up of the project and donated multiple copies of

the Merck Manual and the Merck Manual on Geriatric Care. Elsevier Science contributed preferred pricing for books from its list and expertise in coordinating the packing and shipping of the trunks. New trunks will soon be shipped to Tanzania, Swaziland, Uganda, Malawi, and Botswana.

"Nurses are on the front lines, delivering more than three quarters of primary health care in this region," stated Stella Zengwa, President of the Zimbabwe Nurses Association. "Bringing up to date knowledge to the field, it will be a fabulous resource and tool for the main health workers in developing countries."

Recent evaluations revealed that the libraries are a much-appreciated resource in remote areas where materials are scarce. The Kenyan national nurses association reported that their library in Nyahururu has been enthusiastically received. In the four months since its arrival, they have enrolled 50 active borrowers for the library, and have loaned out 80 books so far.

A student nurse in Mashonaland, Zimbabwe commented that the "books are very useful, as they are recent publications with all the necessary information to make my studies meaningful. I started using them in July 2002 and from there I have been grabbing one after another for they are what I need. They have information on how to work hand in hand with other health professionals like laboratory, X-ray department, pharmacists, physiotherapists and many others. They make it easy for me to cope with emergencies and alleviate suffering."

Nursing organisations have also taken up support of the project with zeal. The national nurses associations of Germany, Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Taiwan and the United Kingdom, the Nursing College of Wayne State University, and the Florence Nightingale International Foundation, among others, have committed to sponsor the cost of sending a library to a location in need.

For more information, see the International Council of Nurses web site at: www.icn.ch.