Developing and sustaining a strong health workforce requires training health workers to perform their jobs, updating their skills and knowledge to match evolving health needs, and providing workers with opportunities to advance along appropriate and satisfying career paths. However, participation in traditional face-to-face professional development courses can be difficult and expensive, especially for workers who must travel from rural areas, and can significantly impact health service delivery in areas with few health workers.

eLearning interventions, delivered via the Internet, CD-ROM, or flash drive, offer standardized learning content that can be easily revised and is cost-effective over time. Content can be supplemented with face-to-face elements (blended learning) and enhanced with social learning/networking communities of practice. A subset of eLearning, mLearning utilizes mobile phones to deliver training or educational programs. Due to the widespread and rapidly growing availability of these phones, this technology offers a way to deliver timely information to health workers—especially those in the most remote and hard-to-reach areas—in less developed countries.

IntraHealth develops and deploys innovative eLearning methodologies for the preservice education, in-service training, and continuing professional development of health workers, providing health workers with critical health care information and performance support.

### Key Approaches

- Using IntraHealth’s *Learning for Performance* (LFP) instructional design methodology to ensure the content and design of learning interventions address identified performance problems or gaps in health workers’ skills or knowledge
- Developing eLearning courses in collaboration with other organizations, partners, and sites, including USAID’s Global Health eLearning Center
- Addressing critical health worker training gaps through the HRH Global Resource Center (GRC) eLearning platform, which offers open access courses—developed by technical experts in human resources for health (HRH), health informatics, and health service delivery—to build the capacity of country-based users (http://www.hrhresourcecenter.org/elearning/)
- Developing and deploying mLearning methodologies for health worker training, providing information and performance support to health workers, and increasing patient knowledge or encouraging clinical compliance
- Utilizing the spaced education methodology, which employs short messages sent to mobiles or via e-mail at regularly timed intervals to improve retention of learned material
- Using blended learning methodologies that combine two or more capacity-building approaches in one intervention, such as combining self-directed eLearning with periodic face-to-face or virtual discussion sessions.

## Highlights of Recent Work

- A human resources management professional development eLearning course for managers of health facilities in Kenya has been disseminated on the HRH GRC and CD-ROM and blended with live facilitated discussions.
- The HRH GRC eLearning platform is reaching 2,000 users from more than 100 countries. Users report the courses are being applied to train health workers and managers in skill gaps. Course topics include designing evidence-based incentives to retain health workers, HRH monitoring and evaluation, administering iHRIS-based human resources information systems, gender in the health workforce, and using data for decision-making. In Tanzania, the iHRIS administrator course has been integrated into the University of Dar es Salaam’s informatics curriculum in combination with field experience and face-to-face learning.
- Content for spaced education courses, on topics such as the financing of health schools and private-sector health school practices, will be made freely available on the Qstream.com website, a spin-off from Harvard Medical School.
- IntraHealth has developed a platform for delivering learning material on mobile phones using interactive voice response, a technology that states questions aloud to participants, who can enter answers on a keypad. The platform is being piloted in Senegal; 20 health workers who provide family planning counseling are using it to take a refresher training course on the management of contraceptive side effects, rumors, and misconceptions.
- In India, IntraHealth developed mSakhi, a mobile phone application for capacity building and interpersonal communication by accredited social health activists (ASHAs); and mSakhi HBNC, a mobile phone application that supports ASHAs and auxiliary nurse midwives to improve the quality and quantity of postpartum home visits by combining a self-learning and counseling tool with decision support and a real-time monitoring and management tool.
- An mLearning intervention reinforced an HIV testing and counseling course delivered to preservice nursing students in Central America. Key information and interactive quiz questions were sent via SMS text to students. Data revealed that the groups randomized to receive the interactive questions scored higher on the course follow-up post-test than those in the control group that did not receive the mLearning reinforcement.

Contact: Nina Frankel, Senior Technical Advisor, Workforce Development, nfrankel@intrahealth.org

www.intrahealth.org | www.capacityplus.org