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January 1980 through December 1995

471 Selected Citations

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## **PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATICS**

The public health mission is to improve the health of whole communities and populations. Public health professionals focus on (a) preventing, identifying, investigating, and eliminating community health problems and hazards; (b) assuring that the community has access to competent personal health care services; and (c) educating and empowering individuals to adopt more healthy behaviors. [1] As a part of their responsibilities, public health officials often provide personal health care to individuals who would otherwise lack access to care, but it is through population-based interventions that the public health system seeks to have greatest impact. Indeed, over the past two hundred years, major advances in health and longevity have resulted from public health programs to create safe water and sewage disposal systems, to control disease-bearing insects and rodents, to immunize populations, to respond rapidly to disease outbreaks, and to establish and enforce safe food processing and handling practices.

The collection, analysis, use, and communication of health-related information has been called the "quintessential public health service," [2] because all public health activities depend to some extent on the availability of accurate, comparable, and timely information. Given this dependence on information, public health is a natural arena for the application of advanced information technologies. To date, however, a combination of resource constraints, lack of public understanding and support for population-based public health programs, and the complexity of public health information problems has limited the number of successful informatics applications in the field of public health.

As reflected in an April 1995 meeting and July 1995 report, both entitled "Making a Powerful Connection: the Health of the Public and the National Information Infrastructure," [3] agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Library of Medicine, are working with state and local governments, professional associations, and the health care informatics community to promote the application of advanced computer and communications technologies to public health. This bibliography presents a useful picture of the state of the art in "public health informatics," itself a recently coined term [4], and provides background for current and future efforts to improve the information systems that support essential public health functions. The bibliography reveals a geometric increase in the number of publications addressing the application of advanced information technologies to public health over the past sixteen years. It includes 18 papers published from 1980 to 1984, 92 papers from 1985 to 1989, 257 papers from 1990 to 1994, and 104 papers from 1995 alone.

The bibliography focuses on the use of computers and communications to support population-based public health functions -- excluding the primary care services often provided by public health authorities. In general, the large literature about primary care information systems has also been excluded, except as it relates to the transfer of data from primary care to public health information systems, to case management

of individuals and families who rely on a range of social services, to home care services, or to care for the homeless. Outside the United States, in countries in which the national government provides personal health care services to the majority of citizens, the distinction between population-based public health and individual health care is less clear, but the bibliography attempts to maintain the focus on population-based health when citing non-U.S. literature.

Educating the populace about the role of life-style choices and individual behavior in preventing disease and injury is a basic public health function. In this area, the interests of public health professionals overlap to some degree with those of managed care providers and other producers and distributors of consumer health information, including public libraries. The bibliography covers health promotion activities that involve public health authorities, but does not cover the complete range of automated consumer health information initiatives that may be relevant to the public health mission.

The collection and analysis of health-related statistics is an essential public health activity that relies on the use of general statistical methods. This bibliography covers health statistics systems, but excludes the many publications that discuss general purpose tools and techniques for statistical analysis.

The spread of epidemics is one of the classic problems around which the art and science of computer modeling developed, and computer modeling of epidemics has an extensive literature which has been excluded from this bibliography. Other public health applications of computer modeling, such as projecting workforce requirements or emergency response planning, have been included.

The selected references in the bibliography include journal articles, books and book chapters, technical reports, and conference proceedings and papers. English and foreign language publications are cited. References are arranged by subject and appear under only one topic.

The compilers wish to thank Marlyn Schepartz, National Library of Medicine, for her expert production assistance.

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URL: <gopher://gopher.nlm.nih.gov/00/nlminfo/newsletters/reports/niiph.txt> or

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- SS9 = HEALTH PROMOTION OR HEALTH EDUCATION OR PREVENTIVE HEALTH  
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INTERNET GRATEFUL MED is available from the World Wide Web. The user with

Internet access and an NLM user account need only point a compatible Web browser (Netscape Navigator is strongly recommended) to <http://igm.nlm.nih.gov>. No other software at the user end is required. At present, MEDLINE is the only NLM database available through INTERNET GRATEFUL MED, but the Library expects to add access to other files rapidly.

## SAMPLE CITATIONS

Citations in this bibliographic series are formatted according to the rules established for *Index Medicus*<sup>®\*</sup>. Sample journal and monograph citations appear below. For journal articles written in a foreign language, the English translation of the title is placed in brackets; for monographs, the title is given in the original language. In both cases the language of publication is shown by a three letter abbreviation appearing at the end of the citation.

### Journal Article:

*Authors*

*Article Title*

Friede A, Rosen DH, Reid JA. CDC WONDER: a cooperative processing architecture for public health. J Am Med Inform Assoc 1994 Jul-Aug;1(4):303-12.

<i>Abbreviated Journal Title</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Volume</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Pages</i>
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### Monograph:

*Authors/Editors*

*Title*

Hale CD, Arnold F, Travis MT. Planning and evaluating health programs: a primer.

Albany (NY): Delmar Publishers; 1994. 232 p.

<i>Place of Publication</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Total No. of Pages</i>
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\*For details of the formats used for references, see the following publication:

Patrias, Karen. *National Library of Medicine recommended formats for bibliographic citation*. Bethesda (MD): The Library; 1991 Apr. Available from: NTIS, Springfield, VA; PB91-182030.

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## OVERVIEW / APPLICATION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO PUBLIC HEALTH

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