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Medical Recycling Saves L.I.F.E.: ***Learning, Ideas, Facts, Education***

by

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In this age of dwindling resources and soaring expectations, a wholesome concern for our environment is, of course, essential. As stewards of this good Earth, we would do well to conserve our precious material resources, to recycle paper and other reusable goods, and to be open to new ideas on how best to avoid needless waste.

Meanwhile, on a seemingly unrelated front, the task of keeping up-to-date on the latest developments within our medical profession presents a formidable challenge. Stacks of our read, partially read, and, sadly, sometimes unread journals threaten to reach Everest-like heights, while considerations of cost, bookshelf space, and time-management all limit the chances that very many of these journals will ever make their way to the bindery. Even so, we find ourselves continually purchasing still newer textbooks and other medical references. But how can we best dispose of the like-new volumes they replace? True, submitting them to a paper-recycling activity might "save a tree". Yet it seems a shame to condemn these still clinically useful documents to the sad trip back to a paper-mill.

Better, by far, than the recycling of mere paper would be the "recycling" of ideas and information. What may be a "throw-away" journal to us could prove a life-saving communication to a fellow physician in a foreign land. Medical colleagues in the developing nations of Africa, Latin America, Oceania, and Asia are thirsting for the very information that we here in the United States easily take for granted. Likewise, health care professionals in those East European nations, newly freed from oppression behind the "Iron Curtain", are now desperate to share in the explosion of medical information and technology that we have long been enjoying here in the West.

The account of a recent visit on the part of four physicians from Romania to an American medical school serves to bring home the point¹: These four physicians -three cardio-thoracic surgeons and an anesthesiologist - were awed by the holdings

in the library of one American medical center; two entire floors were dedicated to medical journals alone. It was beyond anything they could comprehend. Textbooks that we take for granted, at prices well within our reach, were hopelessly out of range for these doctors whose monthly salaries approximate US\$40.

The situation in Romania is archetypical of medical conditions in other Eastern European nations. Only since the overthrow of the Communist regime, have we in the Western World come to fully appreciate the desperate plight of the medical profession there. Hospitals are of the 1920's vintage. They had no access to Western medical information or technology for some fifteen years. Fortunately, the educational standard of the doctors has remained reassuringly high, despite the fact that, after 1984, it was an imprisonable offense to receive any Western medical journals! The overthrow of the Ceausescu regime caused still further deterioration. During the 1989 Christmas revolution, an estimated 500,000 books in the library of the University of Bucharest were destroyed.^{2,3}

If the situation in Eastern Europe is bleak, the predicament in many parts of Africa, Latin America, and Asia is more desperate still.

"Alongside the food crisis, Africa, for example, is beset by a much more insidious famine . . . the terrible dearth of books and other teaching materials."^{2,4} Nearly all African countries south of the Sahara are sorely afflicted. Medical professionals in these struggling, new nations are intellectually starved for lack of books, journals and the chance to travel to other countries to attend conferences or conduct research. "A tour of almost any African institution of higher learning provides a distressing picture of neglect, indifference and declining standards. In the typical library, scarcely any journals are up to date."^{2,4}

Taking Matters in Your Own Hands

There could be no better way to distribute medical texts and journals to a needy mission-clinic, than to hand-carry them yourself. Why not take the plunge? Numerous organizations, both church-based and secular, would enthusiastically welcome your offer to serve as a volunteer-consultant in a medical outpost, for a two to six-week rotation, or longer. To the personal rewards of serving distant patients, who are in desperate need of your care, you could add the satisfaction of seeing the medical references that had been sitting idly upon your library shelves, now being avidly read and re-read by grateful third-world clinicians.

For those of us who are not able to practice overseas right now, sending these needed medical items abroad on a one-to-one basis can also prove personally rewarding. Developing a direct, personal, on-going communication with a physician or other health care professional in the medical missions is a wonderful commitment, and one which is sure to be met with heart-felt and prayerful gratitude. Unfortunately, few of us physicians have readily available the contacts or the time to follow through on a regular basis.

Third-Party Contact with Third-World Medicine

Luckily, numerous organizations are standing by to assist us in channeling these important references to those most in need. The Medical Library Association maintains a list of organizations which actively solicit medical journals and textbooks. Their list is available on request:

Medical Library Association
Suite 300
Six North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60602-4805
(312) 419-9094
FAX: (312) 419-8950

Also, a very helpful article on the topic is²:

Ruelle, Barbara: International Donation of Medical Books and Journals: A "How-To" Manual. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly* 11(2):35-45. 1992.

Another charitable organization which would serve as a clearinghouse concerning the donation and overseas distribution of medical journals and texts is ^{5,6}:

American International Book Development Council
Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation
Attn: William M. Childs
1319 Eighteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-6264
FAX: (202) 296-5149

In addition, a roster of actively involved organizations appears at the end of this article.

Stamping Out Disease

Several organizations would even be willing to reimburse your postage costs, when you mail to them a packet of texts which they have, by prior agreement with you, specifically requested. Otherwise, most organizations will need to depend on you to deliver the journals to them at your own expense, and then they will take on the burden of distribution from there. Postage can be costly, especially when mailing large numbers of heavy volumes. (Check with your tax-consultant; postage costs for this purpose may be tax-deductible.) You might also look into other options such as United Parcel Service. If you are able to mail from and to a library address, special postage rates may apply. Station-to-station package delivery by train or bus may prove to be an economical option.

A Stitch in Time

Of course, you do want to be selective in what you pass along. Journals and texts that are markedly out-of-date are probably no more useful there than here. Most organizations set a guideline of soliciting only journals and texts which are no more than ten years old. And, given the rapid progress in our field, even after five years, you should take a critical second look, before packing old journals off to a foreign land. (One wag suggested that we should not send overseas any journals that are older than the magazines in our waiting room!) Postage and transportation fees and other expenses are considerable. More importantly, we want to be providing timely consultation for our counterparts abroad, not pointlessly patronizing them. When in doubt, it is always wise to check first before forwarding your volumes.

Dying to Help?

Not uncommonly, a physician seems to address the prospect of donating his medical books and journals with much the same caution that he would apply to personally donating an unpaired, vital organ. Not until he is absolutely, positively dead, will a single tome depart his possession. Unfortunately, by the time his journals become a distributable part of the estate, their timeliness is markedly impaired. How much better to pass along these references, while they still can be put to good use by medical contemporaries abroad.

Deductive Reasoning?

All this, and a tax-deduction, too? Your donation of medical texts or journals may be considered a tax-deductible, charitable "donation in-kind".⁵ Organizations with a non-profit [501 (c)(3)] status are usually glad to provide you, on request, a statement of receipt, recognizing and enumerating your donations. In most cases, they would prefer, however, that you yourself estimate the monetary value of your donation for your own tax purposes. Be sure to consult with your tax-advisor for confirmation and details.

The following is a roster (by no means exhaustive) of several organizations which currently solicit medical textbooks and journals. *Please be sure to contact personally the organization of your choice to confirm details before forwarding any shipments to them.*

Worldwide

International Book Bank
Attn: Suzette Ungvarsky, Manager of Operations
815 Central Avenue, Suite F
Linthicum, MD 21090
(410) 636-6895
FAX: (410) 636-6898

International outreach; medical texts and journals less than eight years old.
Request a copy of their informative "IBB Book Donation Guidelines."

Catholic Medical Missions Board
Attn: Rev. James J. Yannarell, S.J.
10 West 17th Street
New York, NY 10011
(212) 242-7757

Worldwide outreach. Arrange shipments of medical journals and texts through
warehouse on Long Island, attn: Michael Gordon (718) 721-9269.*

Project Handclasp
Attn: M.C. Tevelson, Director
C/O Commander Naval Base
San Diego, CA 92132-5180
(619) 532-1492

Transports medical journals and texts, as well as other needed materials, to
underprivileged schools and institutions overseas, via U.S. Navy ships on
deployment.*

Interchurch Medical Assistance
Attn: Steve Halstead
P.O. Box 429
New Windsor, MD 21776
(410) 635-8720

Worldwide, interdenominational outreach, providing medications, equipment,
medical textbooks and journals.

People-to-People Health Foundation
Attn: Scott Crawford, Director of Gift-in-Kind
Carter Hall
Millwood, VA 22646
(703) 837-2100
FAX: (703) 837-1813

International outreach, primarily need basic medical, nursing and allied health
texts. Texts and bound journals, multiple copies preferred. Send titles first.*

Darien Book Aid Plan
Attn: Peggy Minnis, Peace Corps Desk
1926 Post Road
Darien, CT 06820
(203) 866-3006
FAX: (203) 866-4070

Worldwide distribution to Peace Corps Volunteers. Have provided medical texts to hospitals in Jamaica, Turkey, and elsewhere.*

World Bank Volunteer Services Book Project
Attn: Mr. James Lee
559B Commerce Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20792
(301) 390-4317
FAX: (202) 522-0301

Distribution to developing countries worldwide. New and used texts including medical textbooks (less than 10 years old) and journals (less than 5 years old).*

Eastern Block Nations

American Friendship Library Foundation
Attn: Jeffrey Gallagher
3201 Brook Road
Richmond, VA 23227
(804) 775-3100

Textbooks, medical and non-medical. World-wide outreach.

Journalshare
Attn: Merle Colglazier, President
912 Pinewood Drive
Richmond, VA 23233-5313
(804) 741-8802

Medical journals, bound and unbound. World-wide outreach.

Sabre Foundation, Inc.
Scientific Assistance Project
872 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 2-1
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 868-3510
FAX: (617) 868-7916

Books only, not journals, within the past five years. Your donations will be sent as co-shipments with large shipments of new books received directly from publishers.*

Albania

Eugenio Pelizzari
Biblioteca della Facolta di Medicina
Universita degli studi di Brescia
Via Valsabbina, 19
25123 BRESCIA
ITALY

Doctors in the Hospital in Berat, Albania, are in great need of medical information.**

Czech Republic

Institute for Medical Information
National Medical Library
121 32 PRAHA 2
CZECH REPUBLIC

Russia

Heart-to-Heart
Attn: Bob Burdick
3300 Webster Street, Suite 505
Oakland, CA 94609
(510) 839-4280
FAX: (510) 839-3701

This health-care team provides expertise to children's and maternity hospitals in Saint Petersburg. Recent journals within the past 2-3 years; those applying to pediatrics, neonatology, obstetrics, cardiology and cardiac surgery are especially welcome.

International Book Exchange
State Central Scientific Medical Library
30, Krasikova
117418 MOSCOW
RUSSIA

Poland

Polish American Congress Charitable Foundation
Attn: Les Kuczynski, National Executive Director
5711 North Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, IL 60646
(312) 286-0500
FAX: (312) 763-7114

Medical textbooks are donated to university and hospital libraries and the Ecology Library in Poznan. All donations will be distributed by the Polish Episcopate Charity Commission.

Asia and the Pacific Nations

The Asia Foundation
451 Sixth Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 982-4640
FAX: (415) 543-8131

Medical and non-medical books as well as bound medical journals published with in the past eight years. No loose journals.

China

Medical Books for China, International
13021 East Florence Avenue
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670-4505
(310) 946-8774

Medical books and journals as well as audiocassettes and medical equipment are needed.*

Philippines

Philippines Library Materials Foundation
Attn: Isabelita Tinio
783 Helendale
Rochester, NY 14609
(716) 482-5273

Missionary priests visiting from the Philippines will pick up both medical and nursing journals and texts, as well as other worthwhile books, for use in colleges and universities in the Philippines. Call first to make arrangements.*

Books for the Barrios
Attn: Nancy Harrington
2350 Whitman Road, Suite D
Concord, CA 94518-2555
(510) 687-7701
FAX: (510) 687-8298

Able to distribute recent, basic medical and nursing texts to impoverished areas in the Philippines. Patient-oriented literature especially welcome.*

India

Publications and Information Directorate
Senior Librarian
Hillside Road
New Delhi, 110012
INDIA

Indonesia

California - Indonesia Educational Foundation
Attn: Dr. Lee Kian Joe
30 Lansdale
San Francisco, CA 94127
(415) 681-1866

Medical journals and texts (less than 10 years old, please) will be forwarded to medical schools and universities in Indonesia. Please call first to confirm arrangements..*

Latin America

Biblioteca do Setor de Ciencias da Saud
Rua Padre Camago, No. 280
80.000 Curitiba
Parana
BRAZIL

Please first send for a list of their needs. They are willing to reimburse postage.

Caribbean

Ross University School of Medicine
Attn: Doctor Louis Andujar
460 West 34th St., 12th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 279-9525
FAX: (212) 629-3147

Medical School in Dominica with Veterinary School in Saint Kitts. Recent medical textbooks and journals. Please send list first.

Africa

The Lambo Foundation
P.O. Box 702, Maryland Estate
Ikeja, Lagos
NIGERIA

Distributes medical books and journals in Africa.*

Books for Africa
Attn: Dr. Robert J. Kowalczyk, Executive Director
5233 Silver Maple Circle
Minneapolis, MN 55343
(612) 933-9889
FAX: (612) 933-6966

Able to distribute basic medical and nursing texts, not journals, to 18 African nations.*

African Outreach Foundation
Attn: Florence Guindo, Director
8404 Cedar Street
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 565-0774
FAX: (202) 473-8231

In need of basic medical texts and self-help medical information, as well as medications and medical equipment for distribution through Peace Corps volunteers and non-government organizations throughout Africa.

* For these organizations, the importance of prior contact before sending donated materials, is re-emphasized.

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 6. Childs WM: *American Donated Books Abroad: Guide to Distributing Organizations*. American International Book Development Council, pub., 4000 Albermarle Street, NW, Washington, DC 20016.
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