

Where HINARI took me and where I took HINARI



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Last year's EAHIL conference in Estoril is now eight months behind us and our professional community is already looking forward to meeting up in Istanbul. However, one important aspect of the conference in Portugal has remained with me permanently. I was one of fourteen participants who attended a HINARI *Train the Trainers* CE Course held a day before the official opening. Under the inspiring tutelage of Lenny Rhine and Gaby Caro we were introduced to key features of the HINARI platform, issues related to access and geographical coverage and the core training modules available to trainers. Using a temporary log-in we experienced the way in which health professionals and librarians in the developing world obtained the online scientific literature. This is an impressive collection of electronic journals, databases and reference sources that would leave many developed parts of the world green with envy. Lenny and Gaby offered a wealth of personal experience and plenty of encouragement. Some participants were hoping to join the projects involving HINARI eligible institutions. Others wished to promote the awareness in their own organizations, primarily amongst visiting students, academics and medics who would benefit from HINARI on their return home. We asked a lot of questions and enjoyed a lively discussion. There was no shortage of photographs from recent HINARI workshops, many held under warm and sunny skies, to boost our interest and Lenny's and Gaby's enthusiasm was contagious.

One day course is just a one day course. You have to accept that, should an opportunity come your way, a lot more preparation is required before you are able to train people. My opportunity came frighteningly soon. Just a month after the EAHIL conference, with a mixture of excitement and apprehension, I accepted to join two experienced colleagues, Keith Nockels from the University of Leicester (UK) and Getachew Bayissa from the University of Jimma (Southern Ethiopia), to help deliver a week long module on Evidence-Based Practice and Health Informatics to the MSc students at the University of Gondar (Northern Ethiopia). This Master's programme is one of many successful initiatives of the Leicester-Gondar Medical and University Link, a well established collaboration going back some 15 years (<http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/gondar-information-hub>). For the September 2010 intake they were expecting around 35 students from all regions of Ethiopia. As this was a first module of their two year programme, with a lot of hands on exercise, the faculty were looking for a third librarian tutor, preferably one familiar with HINARI. Partnerships in Health Information (Phi), a UK based charity which promotes health librarianship in the developing world, helped coordinate the project and secured funds for my visa, insurance and travelling expenses (<http://www.partnershipsinhealthinformation.org.uk/>).

With the departure scheduled for 11th September I had no time to waste. And this is where a one day *Train the Trainers* course seamlessly turned into a distance coaching of a novice trainer. Regardless of their busy schedules in Geneva (Gaby) or anywhere in the HINARI world (Lenny), my mentors always found time to respond to my queries and offer advice and reassurance. They helped me decide how much teaching content to prepare for the two days



Fig. 1. Students busy retrieving from HINARI.

excellent. Those who were already familiar with HINARI were able to improve their skills and explore resources they had not used before, but the majority of students were first time users and they took to HINARI immediately. In the first instance the focus was on retrieving the literature for their Master's programme, but as active clinicians they were quick to recognize the full potential of HINARI. This was going to be their professional lifeline, a gateway to up-to-date research and clinical practice vital to low-income countries. Out of 45 MSc students at Gondar there were 21 clinical and laboratory scientists, 15 midwives, 5 physiotherapists and 4 anaesthetists. As I paced up and down a crowded classroom, forever tripping up over random cables, I tried to guess how many practitioners further down the stream these students would be able to introduce to HINARI in the near future.

I learned a great deal in Ethiopia. Any preconceptions about the distance between the minority and the majority world went out the window. I met energetic, vibrant people, hungry for knowledge, who refuse any notion of being left behind by the more developed countries. They came up with clinical scenarios and diagnostic dilemmas that would sound familiar anywhere in the world. The five or ten minutes it might have taken to open a PDF did not faze them. Their mind was on the findings in the paper and whether this would provide the answer they were seeking. They were keen to know about any electronic resources which delivered reliable medical information. I realised how much librarian tutors could offer professionals at the healthcare frontline in resource poor settings and moreover how much this means to them and the people whose health they are trying to improve. Great rewards can come out of a one day CE Course – you should try it!!

HINARI Trainers Photo Album

<http://picasaweb.google.com/hinari.trainers>

Launched in January 2002, the HINARI Access to Research Initiative (<http://www.who.int/hinari/>) is a collaborative World Health Organization/Participating Publishers' project that provides free or very low cost online access to the major journals and other electronic resources in biomedical and related social sciences to local, not-for-profit institutions in developing countries. Over 7500 e-journals, e-books and other resources are now available to health institutions in 105 countries, areas and territories benefiting many thousands of health workers and researchers, and in turn, contributing to improved world health. All faculty, students and staff at an institution can receive the user name and password and access the e-journals and other electronic resources. For institutions in countries with a gross national income (GNI) below \$1600 per year (Band 1), there is no cost. For organizations in countries with a GNI between \$1600 and \$4700 USD (Band 2), the annual cost for access is \$1000 per institution.

allocated for the introduction to HINARI and search skills training; guided me in adapting to a slower internet and possible threats of a computer virus; arranged a temporary user name and password for tutors and ensured everyone in Gondar had their institutional log-in details in place. I received such fantastic support I was feeling somewhat guilty about my occasional moments of self-doubt.

In the event everything went really well. 45 students turned up for the module (a last minute increase!) and worked diligently for five days without much pause. At one point the electricity was down for half a day but we managed to make up for the lost time. The content was covered in full and the interaction with students was



Fig. 2. Some of the 45 students with their tutors.