Spotlight on School Nurse Resource Center

Public schools face a variety of challenges in meeting the health needs of their students. Although school nurses play a critical role in addressing those needs, they typically have limited access to professional networks and clinical information resources. This is especially true for nurses who work in schools located in rural areas.

With funding from a 2003 UTMB President's Cabinet Award, the School Nurse Resource Center Web Site was launched by the UTMB Telehealth Center earlier this year as part of a larger project to provide school nurses with expanded access to educational and clinical resources. The site offers several online continuing nursing education programs on clinical topics that have been identified as priority learning needs by school nurses. Additionally, the site offers a web-based consultation service whereby school nurses can discuss specific health-related issues with a UTMB pediatrician via a discussion board format.

In addition to development of the web site, the project's accomplishments include the establishment of a partnership between UTMB and public school districts in Galveston County and East Texas that uses existing telecommunications networks to link school nurses with the expertise and resources available at UTMB. Specific strategies to create this “virtual school community” include expanded access to UTMB’s annual School Health Conference and the opportunity for participation in the “Life Skills for Better Health” series through the use of videoconferencing. This year, the School Health Conference was broadcast, for the first time, to remote sites in Beaumont, permitting school nurses to participate without leaving their community. Additionally, the Life Skills series was broadcast in March and April to an audience of teachers and school nurses in the Longview Independent School District.