



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
The University of Texas at Tyler

Organization URL:
<http://www.uttyler.edu/nursing/msns/>

Project Name:
Medical Special Needs Shelter: Just-in-Time Online Training Website

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The University of Texas at Tyler (UTTyler) College of Nursing (CON) became involved in disaster sheltering during hurricane Katrina. During subsequent disasters, the CON operated Medical Special Needs Shelters (MSNS) and identified several challenges. One challenge was the lack of an organized approach to orientation of MSNS volunteers. This Just-in-Time Online Training (JiTOT) fills that gap. During a disaster, there is little time to prepare a shelter equipped to serve those with medical needs. The creation of this free JiTOT was our answer to the unique training needs of those who volunteer for this service. In development of the JiTOT, we tried to be specific enough to meet the needs of our volunteers (healthcare providers, nursing students and lay volunteers) but general enough to be used by any individual or group who want to serve in a medical shelter in response to any disaster. The success of the JiTOT relates to the accessibility of quality training material, at the time of need and at no cost to the individual or organization. To that end, the project is a success. The JiTOT is housed on UTTyler servers that are monitored continuously and are large enough to accommodate a surge of traffic, as is expected during a disaster. Local health departments and volunteer organizations can link directly to JiTOT or request a copy of the program and house it on their organization website. An unexpected success was recognition by the "Journal of Nursing Education: Top Teaching Tools Award 2011." The JNE Award Selection Committee wrote: "This is a tool that can easily be used with students and as a model for schools that might be thinking of setting up such a shelter or getting involved in disaster planning in other ways..."

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

Project developers used SoftChalk, an e-learning authoring tool software, to create interactive online lessons and organize content in a user-friendly format. The videos, graphics, and quizzes helped to engage the learner and facilitate comprehension and retention of the material. Nurse educators, familiar with the learning needs of potential users, were paired with instructional and web design experts to ensure that the content was user-friendly in an online environment and adhered to accessibility recommendations. One of the challenges to successful implementation was getting the information to the multitude of potential users around the world. Special attention was paid to the use of adequate key words for search efficiency for those who did not know that MSNS training exists. The training is universally accessible via the UTTyler website. A Google search using the term "Medical Special Needs Shelter" results in access to the JiTOT in one of the top five choices, increasing access to material at the time of need.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

Hurricane Katrina brought to our attention the group of people who did not have the physical, mental or financial resources to self-evacuate prior to or following a disaster. Many in this group are medically fragile and need care requiring special skills. Volunteers with those skills were willing to respond but there was no orientation or training to facilitate a rapid and organized response to these needs. Since Katrina, shelters that address the needs of the medically fragile have opened in response to various disasters including floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, and fires. Many organizations, both small and large, respond by opening shelters for disaster evacuees. Several organizations even have training available for volunteers but that training is not set up for immediate, online, and universal access. Disaster shelters specializing in the care of those with non-acute medical needs are essential to minimize the strain on communities, acute care hospitals and emergency rooms. Hospitals, national, state, and local health departments, and specialized disaster emergency response teams have requested information about the website. It has been specifically used in disaster preparedness programs and posted on websites for the following groups and agencies: Texas Hospital Preparedness Program; Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas TRAIN program; Public Health Foundation TRAIN program in Washington, D.C.; Emergency Response Team, Cincinnati, Ohio; and the Kentucky Hospital Association. The CON at UTTyler has also partnered with Indiana University - Purdue University at Fort Wayne in conducting shelter setup drills with nursing students using the JiTOT for student orientation and preparation. Finally, the JiTOT project was shared via poster presentation at the 2011 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

This website was recently awarded the "Journal of Nursing Education: Top Teaching Tools Award 2011." The JNE Award Selection Committee wrote, "This is a tool that can easily be used with students and as a model for schools that might be thinking of setting up such a shelter or getting involved in disaster planning in other ways. There is a great deal of potential for also using this site for teaching about role differentiation, community involvement, and delegation" (JNE, 2011). A second example that supports the benefit of the project was received from the education department of the Public Health Foundation: "My name is Michelle Clausen and I am the Program Assistant for TRAIN (<https://www.train.org>), the leading centralizing repository of training and education for public health and safety professionals. I was recently forwarded a link to your Just-

In-Time Trainings, available on your website (<http://www.uttyler.edu/nursing/msns/>). Our partners felt it would be an excellent opportunity if your trainings were posted to TRAIN and promoted to the 450,000 public health professionals actively using TRAIN across the nation."