

Supercourse Newsletter
October 30, 2005

www.pitt.edu/~super1.edu
www.bibalex.org/SuperCourse/Index.htm
www.bibalex.org/english/initiatives/SupercourseArchive.htm

Halloween Edition of the Supercourse...don't be afraid!!

Dear Friends :

Q: Why didn't the skeleton cross the road?

A: Because he didn't have any guts.

Pakistan: Our work to use epidemiology and Internet technologies to help the kids in Pakistan is working. Drs. Khawar Kazmi and Ali Ardalan have joined Soni Dodani. Ali and others have generated 4 outstanding, state of the art lectures on Earthquakes. We will be distributing his lecture titled "Earthquake in Pakistan, Oct. 8, 2005. It is a wonderful lecture that presents the best possible information concerning the science of disasters, and how this relates to the horrible earthquake in Pakistan. The kids are still scared, as Khawar indicated as they still are feeling the rumblings of earthquakes through out Pakistan. As seen on Pakistani TV, floors of school buildings crashed killing dozens of kids. They also saw kids their own age dying or horribly maimed being pulled from building. This has lead to a fear, and a perceived risk that if they go to school, they will die. We want children to understand that earthquakes are acts of nature, and there are seismologic reasons why they occur. In addition, we as epidemiologists want to present risk estimates so people realize that earthquakes, even a massive one as in Pakistan, are rare events. For example, Khawar showed that in the past 10 years about 1,500,000 people died of heart attacks, whereas 40,000 died in the earthquake. Earthquakes are sudden, deadly, and in the news. However, the actual mortality risk over a 10 year period is less than 3% that of CHD, yet Pakistanis, and people world wide fear dying of an earthquake much more than dying of a heart attack. Moreover, kids are afraid to go to school. We want to help them understand the science of what happened, and help them to understand their fears so that they do not become emotionally "stunted" about school and about science. Khawar is now working the teacher's networks so that we can begin to push the lectures forward. We have virtually no resources so we will target the schools have are connected to the Internet, which is likely around 10-20% of the 54,000,000 children which represents 5-10 million children. Khawar just reported that he has talked with some of the teachers groups and they are quite excited about the project. We are soon starting our distribution system and will keep you posted.

Lecture of the week:

Influenza: An Impending Pandemic www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec21431/index.htm
Whether you are located in the US, UK, Russia or rural China, the fear of avian flu is creeping up from your TV screen, Internet, radio, or word of mouth. We see dead chickens in garbage bags in Asia, and Turkey. Avian flu is really hot. What is avian flu? Is it as dangerous as it sounds? Rachid Chotani from Johns Hopkins university is aiming to give us the answer in his Just in Time lecture "Influenza: An Impending Pandemic" accessible at www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec21431/index.htm Interestingly, despite having 10 events with influenza pandemic potential in the past few decades, we were fortunate not to experience full blown flu pandemic in the past 35 years! We have additional JIT lectures on this topic: "Avian Influenza Zoonosis" www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec13521/index.htm and "Bird Flu" www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec13421/index.htm We have several other excellent lectures just on influenza itself. Please visit the Supercourse website for more information. Faina Linkov reporting.

Q: Why did the vampire need mouthwash?

A: She had bat breath.

Fall: This is the peak of Autumn, and this year is exceptionally beautiful. Despite nature coming at us with Katrina, Rita, and earthquakes, fall is so beautiful in Western Pennsylvania, you should come and visit. The leaves practically glow - yellow, green, and orange. The squirrels (and of course the turkeys) are fat as pigs. Walking outside is fantastic as it is just above freezing and you can smell the wood fires, especially this year as the price per liter of gas is about the same as a one caret diamond. It is a most beautiful time of year, but a little sad as we enter into the cold of winter.

Q: Why don't monsters eat clowns?

A: Because they taste funny.

Have a Happy Halloween! Best regards from your friends in Pittsburgh and world wide

Ron, Faina, Mita, Soni, Eugene, Dracula, Ali, Arlene, Saida, Anna, Frankenstein, Tom, Francois, Khawar, Nat, Julia

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