

Supercourse Newsletter
April 7, 2004

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

Dear Friends:

Iranian Epidemiologist teaches Pittsburgh Students!!

Last week was considerable fun. During the past few weeks we have gotten to know Ali Ardalan, M.D. who is a graduate student in epidemiology at Tehran University. Eric Noji got us in touch with Ali as Ali as an epidemiologist investigated the Bam Earthquake. During our graduate class in International Health we decided to do something quite different. One of the major problems of teaching International Health is that it is difficult to bring in outside speakers. Flying Ali from Iran is prohibitive as the University of Pittsburgh shall we say is a little bit "frugal" (another synonym is cheap).

We wanted to try something with the Supercourse, to have Ali teach our students but not have it cost \$1000s. Ali created a lecture on epidemiology and the Bam earthquake. It was outstanding. If one wants to learn about earthquake epidemiology, Ali's lecture, Eric Noji's and Tom Songer's are the most outstanding series and available on the Supercourse.

Ali sent to us his lecture, then we called him at 3:30 Pittsburgh time (11:30 Tehran time). He then presented his lecture to my students over the telephone with Soni running the computer.

My students were hugely impressed to learn about the Bam Earthquake by an epidemiologist in Tehran. Ali's talk was very beautifully constructed, and we all learned very much. It was also wonderful how our students interacted with Ali. It was almost as good as having him in the room and a lot less expensive.

We are thinking of extending this approach by running a course next year where by we bring in many others from across the world to teach. Thus the first week we could have Eugene Shubnikov from Russia, the second week Ali, the third Yang Ze from China, the Fourth Rania Saad from Cairo, the fifth Pablo Aschner from Columbia, etc.

Also, we might consider identifying a group of speakers who would be willing to do something similar in your country. Thus Faina could present over the Telephone in Nepal, Vint Cerf in Georgia, etc. We could also have multiple classrooms set up with Nigel Paneth presenting simultaneously to students in South Africa, France and Argentina.

Ali is writing a short article for publication with us concerning "cost-effective" distance education as I think we have a means to achieve this. Please let us know if you would like to try this, as it worked so well we could not believe it. It also was great to have our epidemiology students in Pittsburgh to get to develop friends in Iran.

Best regards from Pittsburgh

Ali, Faina, Ron, Mita, Eugene, Soni, Eric, Abed, Rania, Tomoko, Akira

If you would like to come off this list, please send a note to Mital@pitt.edu