Quick dissemination of vital information

SAS makes health data more accessible

The Scientific Institute of Public Health (IPH) collects, analyzes, and publishes Belgian vital statistics. It also carries out epidemiology research. Its activities involve numerous information flows and vast quantities of data. With the help of SAS, the dissemination and visualization of health-related information has been greatly improved. Institute personnel as well as outside laboratories, hospitals, public authorities, and even individual doctors can now rapidly obtain the critical data they need through the Institute’s Web site. They can make up their own statistical reports in a user-friendly manner. Obtaining clear and correct health data has become far easier. It has also maximized the time Institute personnel can spend on their own research and interpretation of data.

What is the most frequent cause of death among Belgian men? Is some sort of epidemic about to break out? Do Flemish men live longer than their Walloon counterparts? How many women died of lung cancer last year? The IPH Epidemiology Department provides the answers to these as well as a wide variety of other health-related questions. They present useful information for universities and hospitals. They also provide the government with data which helps it to evaluate and adjust national health policy.

The IPH bases its answers partly on data which the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) provides. This includes raw data on the population, mortality and births. This mass of vital data is aggregated, collated, and then classified by age, sex, time period, and district and then put into a single database. In addition, IPH relies on a network of 120 laboratories throughout Belgium which investigate blood samples for the presence of certain bacteria and viruses. IPH research results help detect and predict the outbreak of certain epidemics.

Readily accessible information

In order to facilitate the use of demographic and vital statistics, IPH created the Standardized Procedures for Mortality Analysis (SPMA) software. This is a menu-based interface between the database and various statistical procedures. The application offers a valuable tool for anyone involved in analyzing demographic and epidemiological data. It provides highly accurate and detailed reports that facilitate the research requirements of IPH.

The SPMA software is now available on the Institute’s Web site, making it easy for anyone to access the latest health information. Students, doctors, even government ministers can easily generate the statistical reports they need and it only takes a few minutes.

Faster dissemination of information

“Before SPMA-Internet, however, getting a tailor-made statistical report could take up to a week,” recalls Sabine. “The individuals needing information first had to contact us. We would then send standard reports or disks containing raw data. In the latter case, the users needed their own statistical package to extract any useful information from it.”

It’s a similar story when it comes to the dissemination of new data. Previously, users received new information days or weeks after the Institute collected it. Now it is available immediately. “SPMA-Internet is directly linked to our information server. Any new input is therefore instantly available on the Web site,” Sabine explains.

SAS makes life a little easier

IPH turned to SAS for the creation of SPMA-Internet. The link between the Enterprise Intelligence and the Scientific Institute of Public Health is now seamless. The IPH Epidemiology Department and the SAS team have worked closely together to ensure that the application meets the needs of both parties. The result is a powerful tool that makes the analysis of Belgian vital statistics truly interactive. It is easy to use and allows anyone to access the latest health information in a matter of minutes. This has greatly improved the dissemination of health-related information and has made the Institute’s work more efficient and effective.
The SAS/IntrNet

Extranet for more delicate information

But there is much more to this story.

desired information.

and the data can be placed on a single

result is that both the statistical package

and SPMA-Internet became a reality. One

was quickly translated into a SAS version

Web site. Using SAS, the SPMA software

possible to put the SPMA software on the

Excel spreadsheets. All these features

gives the information even greater impact.

presentation is more attractive and this

improve the dissemination of the results

of IPH epidemic research.

impossible to put the SPMA software on the

the Institute

Sabine adds.

Yves.

year and a geographical level,

disease, bacteria, or virus, as well as a

own reports by choosing a specific

new data instantly and can make up their

SPMA-Internet application.

benefits as those offered by the basic

These extranet users enjoy the same

public health authorities have the right to

only clinical researchers, participants or

The extranet contains menus

find the information quickly and in a user-

Web site. In other words, users can always

similar to those that are available on our

Yves.

This could also be useful for other

effects on many diverse fields and

pharmaco-bromatology to epidemiology
disciplines, from microbiology and

health data. Its work can have profound

authority, focuses on, among other things,

overall state of health of the Belgian

close look at health in Belgium

and toxicology. More information is

Now that the distribution

SAS/IntrNet

®

A perfectly scalable solution

and interpretation of health-related data,

have time to spend on the analysis

Researchers also benefit from it.

®

®

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