
INTEGRATING MULTIDISCIPLINARY INFORMATION AND AGENCIES

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Abstract

Once one has developed proficiency in a professional field, it is challenging, but often necessary, to cross over to the language and information of another to better understand the significant links. The recent appearance of two emerging diseases in North America, West Nile virus and Chronic Wasting Disease, has made discipline overlaps quite apparent, and highlighted the need for information resources to facilitate interdisciplinary exchange. New volumes of the WILDPro Electronic Encyclopedia on these diseases will be demonstrated, showing how this may be accomplished.

There is increasing interest in the integration of disease databases that exist in multiple agencies and institutions. One of the most significant incentives for this is as a mechanism for biosurveillance for potential bioterrorists attacks. However, even without this current heightened awareness, there are significant compelling reasons for all agencies to understand how information contained within their systems could be useful when combined with others. One of the most important factors in facilitating database integration is the use of a standardized vocabulary. Current integrated information, surveillance, and records projects such as WILDPro, ZIMS, NAHLN, BioPortal, and BioWatch will be discussed, and the features of each explained.