

### **Michael Medvesky, Director, Public Health Information Group, NYS Department of Health**

Michael Medvesky gave a presentation on the NYS Health Information Network (HIN). The Health Information Network is a secure intranet system for use by public health officials, county health directors, and the NYS Department of Health (DOH). It is an excellent communication tool, allowing the safe exchange, sharing, and submission of data. In addition, the HIN assures local health departments timely and secure access to queryable data sets such as the Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS) data, Tuberculosis data and Communicable Disease registry data, as well as other relevant health information, documents, reports, press releases, and products that can be used for community health assessment and planning. The unique feature of the HIN is a Web server technology that provides a standardized and secure environment for entering data and accessing information resources for both local and state. The environment also eliminates the expensive processes of distributing and maintaining software programs, providing for improved efficiency and productivity for both state and county staff.

The NYSDOH HIN was developed with funding assistance from the Center for Disease Control and an INPHO grant. The HIN project received the NYS Forum for Information Resource Management's Best Practice Award in 1996. The US Center for Disease Control (CDC) has also cited the HIN project as a model for other state and federal Health Information Networks.

Mike presented some of the data issues associated with the HIN. Regarding the use and misuse of information, they had to: (1) address timeliness of information; (2) aggregate population estimates at county and subcounty level; (3) determine crude versus adjusted rates (what standard population to use?); and (4) deal with small area analysis. Some data access issues that they had to address were that the HIN is available at the local level but people outside the local health department cannot access it. Providing access to those who need it, helping them get access, and keeping out others who should not have access are important considerations. Finally, staff support is also an issue as HIN users require technical assistance, as well as update and maintenance support.