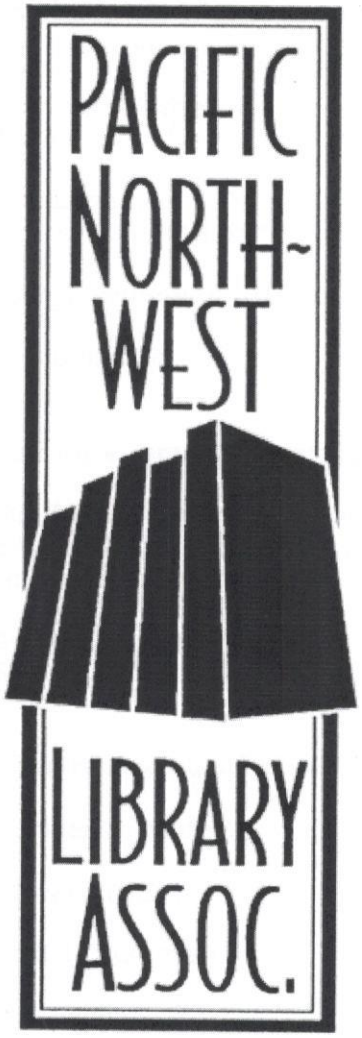
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PNLA QUARTERLY

The Official Journal of the Pacific Northwest Library Association

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Information Seeking and Use by Medical Practitioners at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital

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Introduction

Information seeking and use is a major topic in LIS research. Research on information seeking and use by professionals has been applied to a variety of disciplines such as law, education, engineering, and accountancy. Medical science depends on having good information. Gbadamosi (2004) states that the performance of medical practitioners is contingent upon the sources and skills of medical doctors in searching for relevant information.

The role of information expert entails not only information gathering but also guiding users to it. Akinade and Adedipe (1994) indicate that information seeking can be observed, recorded, and measured. Sharing of important information by people involved in health care services provides avenue to develop and share important information on preventive and curative measures.

Medical practitioners have researched other areas at the University of Ilorin Teaching hospital but not information seeking behaviour and use. Ogunronbi, (2001) indicates that environmental factors and interests influence information seeking habits, practices, needs, and preferences.

Background on the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH)

The University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH) was established by the 1979 Act of Parliament to provide health care services and development of human resources. The objectives of the Teaching Hospital as highlighted by Fakeye (2000) include:

- Health care services using available skill, specialized knowledge, advanced technology, and referrals other hospitals.
- Human resources development and training of medical personnel.
- Research into clinical, epidemiological, and operational research in accordance with internationally accepted guidelines.

A teaching hospital responsibility for training, development, and research into clinical sciences. Mathews and Picken (1979) reports that health professionals increase their contribution to health care and status through interaction with other people's ideas. The University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital cannot stand in isolation if it wants to compete favourably with others.

Medical practitioners depend on a variety of information sources. Medical practitioners require information sources that will improve their performance. Such information sources include patient records, drug information, and other current awareness sources.

Despite the fact that information requirements are an important aspect of health services delivery in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital, little or nothing has been done to research the problem of information needs, sources, availability, and use of available information within the hospital complex. This study aims to identify the information needs and

information-seeking behaviour and the use by practitioners with the aim of improving the existing situation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to identify information sources relevant in the discharge of medical duties, including varying formats and characteristics of each to medical practice and practitioners. The study will include individual preferences of medical practitioners to the different medical information sources and the problems encountered in the process of seeking and use of medical information.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. Identifying sources and types of medical information available in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital library.

2. Identifying job-related needs of medical practitioners in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital.

3. Investigate the information use patterns of medical practitioners in the hospital.

4. Determining the problems encountered while seeking information by medical practitioners in the hospital.

5. Identifying preferred sources and types of information used by medical practitioners in the hospital.

6. Determining the adequacy of library resources in the hospital.

7. Determining the information seeking and use patterns of medical practitioners in the hospital compared to their colleagues in other hospitals.

Based on the objectives stated above, the following research questions will be answered by the study.

1. What are the information sources and types being consulted by medical practitioners?

2. What are job-related types of medical information available in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital library?

3. What are information seeking and use patterns of medical practitioners at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital?

4. What are the problems associated with seeking and use of information by medical practitioners at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital?

5. What are the preferred information sources and types for medical practitioners?

6. What is the level of adequacy of available information sources at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital?

7. What effect has information seeking and use made on medical practitioners at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital compared to their colleagues in other hospitals.

Scope of Study

This study focused on the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital and its medical practitioners includeing doctors, nurses, laboratory technologists, radiologists, ophthalmologists, dentists, and pharmacists. The study will cover only medical practitioners at the General Hospital wing and will not include the maternity hospital wing, because the General Hospital wing houses the largest population of medical practitioners of the entire Teaching Hospital. It also examines areas of information needed for delivery of comprehensive health services by medical practitioners in the Teaching Hospital and ways through which they are being sought and used.

Review of Related Literature

Aina (2002), Salman (2002), and Popoola (2003) observe that information is the accumulated or cumulative knowledge obtained from different subjects in all forms and from all channels that can assist in rational decision-making. Information can also be used to solve problems arising from daily routines among professionals and make them more creative and innovative. Tahir, Mahmood, and Shafique (2008) acknowledge that the knowledge of information needs and information-seeking behaviour of users is vital for developing library collections, upgrading facilities, and improving services to effectively meet the information needs of users. Electronic information retrieval systems are an important aspect of information seeking and use (Hjorland 2000).

Leckie, Pelligrew, and Sylvain (1996) posited that the primary focus of many nurses is patient care, a role that creates tasks requiring information deliverable in specific formats. Akinade (2000) points out that the users of a medical library are predominantly people in the fields of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, biomedical sciences, and public health. Medical practitioners, in order to work together, require digital and electronic information.

Books, journals, audiovisual media, and other electronic resources can be used to disseminate information to professionals (Ogunronbi, 2001). Doctors' information needs, especially those related to patient care, may vary widely from one doctor to the other. Murray (1992) confirms that the use of the library increases with recency of training and consultation with colleagues and decreases as doctors grow older. The use of various information sources is as a result of factors that include types of practices, specialty, location of practice, professional age, and the size of hospitals, as confirmed in the studies by Gruppen, Walf, Van Voorhees, and Stross (1987).

Information seeking in the medical and health related fields has proved to be a fruitful area of research, with considerable attention to sources of information, both formal and informal. Patients or health-conscious citizens use books, journals, Medline, video, and audio recordings. Mabawonku and Atinmo (1980) assert that information which is presented pictorially improves learning in some circumstances, which can improve information use by medical practitioners. Johnson and Meischke (1993) note that individual information seeking has become a critical element in determining health behaviours. Numerous studies have shown that various types of professionals perceive their own collection to be the most accessible and will use those collections even if the information is rather limited, including Gbadamosi (2001), Igbeka and Atinmo (2001), Gbadamosi (2004), and Bello and Musa (2003). Studies of medical practitioners by Woolf and Benson (1991) have shown that they

prefer to seek information from personal or office collections of known books and journals before going elsewhere to look for information.

Many constraints prevent medical practitioners from obtaining needed information. Chiefly among them, as enumerated by Musa and Omopupa (2005), are the lack of academic challenges that require going to the library, time constraints, and lack of loan facility in the library. Perhaps the most dominant barrier in information seeking and use or its applicability is accessibility. The view of relative accessibility of information can be influenced by physical proximity and by considerations such as the language used to convey the information (Ogunronbi, 2001).

Research Design

Survey research was used in this study to gather relevant information and it findings can be generalized to the total population. The research design also includes the collection of data related to information seeking behaviour and use by medical practitioners at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital.

Study Population

The target population of this study is medical practitioners at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. That number, according to the Hospital Registry Record, is 979. The population includes medical consultants, 85; resident doctors 180; house officers 120; nurses 513; pharmacists 35; laboratory technologists 46. A purposive sample of 255 respondents, representing 25% of the population, represents the sample for the study.

Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire designed for this study was divided into four parts. The first part (Section A) collected personal data of respondents including academic qualification and rank. The second part (Section B) focused on information needs and use. The third part (Section C) contained information seeking behaviour and sources, irrespective of format. The fourth part (Section D) was structured to obtain information on the frequency and problems of seeking and use of information. Two hundred and thirty copies of questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 90%.

Method of Data Analysis

The methods of data analysis include frequencies, percentages, tabulation, and descriptive statistics. The responses were recorded and analysed with SPSS software.

Results

Table 1: Acquisition of Medical Information

Table 1 indicates that acquisition of medical information is paramount to medical practice.

Table 2: Types of Medical Information Sources

Table 2 shows that nearly half of respondents consult journals for their medical information needs, followed by smaller numbers who used books and Medline. The tradition of total reliance on books is shifting to journals and Medline that are more current in their contents.

Table 3: Adequacy of Medical Information Resources

Table 3 shows that most respondents found the hospital's information resources to be adequate.

Table 4: Most Used Information Resources

Table 4 shows that personal collections of information resources were ranked higher than other information resources. Medical practitioners in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital make use of personal information sources because of their proximity.

Table 5: Information Resources Consultation

Table 5 shows that more than half of respondents frequently consult information resources in the discharge of their medical duties.

Table 6: The Effectiveness of Medical Information

Table 6 indicates a large majority of respondents find medical information resources made them highly effective in the discharge of their medical duties.

Table 7: Information Seeking Behaviour and Use

Table 7 shows that a large majority of respondents agree that their information seeking and use behaviour has changed since their appointment in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital.

Table 8: Sources of Information

Table 8 rshows that a nearly equal number of respondents use information resources from the hospital library and from their personal collections.

Table 9: Problems Affecting Use of Medical Information

Table 9 indicates that poor awareness of the importance of information and inadequate qualified information personnel were factors responsible for ineffectiveness in seeking and use of medical information resources.

TABLE 10: Rating of Available Medical Information

Table 10 reveals that about one quarter each of respondents found information services to be professional and friendly, found available medical information resources to be timely, and agreed that available medical information was accessible, while a similar number indicated that available medical information resources in the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital are accurate to their information seeking and use.

Table 11: Problems of Information Seeking and Professional Performance

Table 11 shows that a large majority of respondents found that information problems affect their professional performance.

Summary of Findings

The study investigates information seeking behaviour and use of medical information resources by medical practitioners at University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital with a view to improving it for better services by medical practitioners. Application of information for discharge of medical duties will not only assist users but beneficiaries of medical services. Consequently, this gesture is not only serving medical practitioners but the entire community of patients too.

Acquisition of information is important to medical practitioners either as personal collection or in a library or information centre. Medical practitioners prefer journals and Medline.

The findings equally show that the majority of respondents agreed on the adequacy of medical information resources. The hospital library and personal collections are not only close to the practitioners but relevant to their needs.

While ranking factors affecting effectiveness of information seeking and use by medical practitioners, result shows that lack of interest and poor awareness ranked highest. Qualified information personnel should be recruited to staff the information service points in the hospital. Information availability as shown in the results reveal that medical practitioners enjoy the available information while seeking and using them in terms of professional friendliness, timeliness, accessibility, and accuracy.

Possible solutions were offered to the problems of information seeking and use behaviours by the medical practitioners include provision of adequate funds, provision of qualified librarians and information specialists.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions are made:

- Librarians should endeavour to make their services more attractive to the medical practitioners. Libraries are established to serve by stocking more relevant information materials in various formats. In addition they are meant to provide current awareness services and selective dissemination of information in the areas of medical information.
- Medical practitioners should be encouraged to visit and use library materials, especially audiovisual and other non-book materials. Medical practitioners should be remunerated and encouraged to develop their personal collections.
- Hospital management should organize seminars, conferences, and symposia on information sciences and on how to improve medical practitioners' information and use behaviour. Book fairs where medical texts and other materials can be displayed to provide information materials and face-to-face interaction with sellers of medical books on how to foster a permanent relationship between medical practitioners and suppliers of medical information should be encouraged.
- Fund should be made available to librarians to buy necessary materials. Medical practitioners should also be encouraged to acquire personal collections. Librarians in the hospital must be specialised in the areas of medical information. Chairs, tables, and shelves should be arranged to make life more comfortable for users. Lastly, the opening hours of the libraries should be arranged to suit the convenience of medical practitioners since they work in shifts.

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Appendix 1

TABLE 1. Is the acquisition of medical information important to you?

S/N											
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	9	4.1	15	6.6	17	7.4	-	-	41	18.1
2.	Resident Doctors	-	-	4	1.7	-	-	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	4	1.7	9	4.1	2	0.8	2	0.8	17	7.4
4.	Nurses	6	26.4	70	30.6	6	2.5	-	-	136	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	4	1.7	8	3.3	-	-	-	-	12	5.0
6.	Pharmacists	6	2.5	12	5.0	2	0.8	-	-	20	8.3
	Total	84	36.4	128	51.3	27	11.5	2	0.8	230	100

TABLE 2. What types of medical information sources are known to you?

S/N		BOOKS	JOURNAL	MAGAZINES	MEDLINE	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	7	3.3	26	11.6	4	1.7	4	1.7	4	178.3
2.	Resident Doctors	-	-	4	1.7	-	-	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	2	0.8	6	2.5	6	2.5	4	1.7	18	7.83
4.	Nurses	40	17.4	47	20.7	26	11.6	23	9.9	136	60.00
5.	Lab. Scientists	-	-	8	3.3	-	-	4	1.7	12	5.2
6.	Pharmacists	2	0.8	15	6.6	2	0.8	-	-	19	8.2
	Total	51	22.30	106	46.4	38	16.6	35	15.0	230	100

TABLE 3. How adequate are the medical information resources in your hospital library?

S/N		V.A	A	F.A	I.A	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	2	0.8	7	3.3	20	9.1	12	5.0	41	17.8
2.	Resident Doctors	-	-	-	-	4	1.7	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	2	1.8	6	2.5	9	4.1	-	-	17	7.4
4.	Nurses	27	11.6	72	31.4	31	13.2	7	3.3	137	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	-	-	6	2.5	-	-	6	2.5	12	5.0
6.	Pharmacists	-	-	2	0.8	13	5.8	4	1.7	19	8.3
	Total	31	14.2	93	40.5	77	33.9	29	12.5	230	100

TABLE 4. Which of the following information resources do you use most in the discharging of your profession?

Information Resources	Book	Journal	Medical colleagues	Medical online facility	Medical reference books	Personal collection	Govt and NGO Collection	Patient Medical Records	Total
No of Respondents	19	24	27	27	32	36	31	34	230
Percentage of respondents	8.2	10.3	11.6	11.9	14.0	15.5	13.4	15.1	100

TABLE 5. How often do you consult information resources?

S/N		VERY FREQUENTLY		FREQUENTLY		INFREQUENTLY		NOT AT ALL		TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%				
1.	Consultants	9	4.1	24	10.7	6	2.5	2	0.8	42	18.1				
2.	Residents Doctors	2	0.8	2	0.8	-	-	-	-	4	1.6				
3.	House officers	2	0.8	12	5.0	4	1.7	-	-	18	7.5				
4.	Nurses	26	11.6	62	27.3	40	17.4	8	3.3	136	59.6				
5.	Lab. Scientists	-	-	8	3.3	4	1.7	-	-	12	5.0				
6.	Pharmacists	-	-	17	7.4	2	0.8	-	-	18	8.2				
	Total	39	17.3	125	54.5	56	24.1	10	4.1	230	100				

TABLE 6. How would you rate the effectiveness of medical information to your job?

S/N		V H IGH	H I G H	FA I R	POOR	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	2.	.8	8	3.3	28	12.4	4	1.7.	42	18.2
2.	Resident Doctors	-	-	4	1.7	-	-	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	2	.8	9	4.1	4	1.7	2	.8	17	7.4
4.	Nurses	40	17.4	66	28.9	29	12.4	2	.8	136	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	-	-	6	2.5	2	.8	4	1.7	12	5.0
6.	Pharmacists	2	.8	4	1.7	9	4.1	4	1.7	19	8.3
	Total	46	20.0	97	42.2	71	31.4	16	6.7	230	100

TABLE 7. Do you agree that your information seeking behaviour and use has changed since your appointment in this hospital?

S/N		SA	A	DS	SD	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	12	5.0	23	9.9	8	3.3	-	-	43	18.2
2.	Resident Doctors	2	0.8	2	0.8	-	-	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	2	0.8	9	4.1	6	2.5	-	-	17	7.4
4.	Nurses	25	10.7	97	42.1	12	5.0	2	0.8	136	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	4	1.7	6	2.5	2	0.8	-	-	12	5.0.
6.	Pharmacists	9	4.1	9	4.1	-	-	-	-	18	8.3
	Total	54	23.47	146	63.47	28	12.20	2	0.86	230	100

TABLE 8. To what extent is your information pattern different from other professional colleagues in other hospitals?

S/N		V HIGH	HIGH	FAIR	POOR	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	9	4.1	13	5.8	19	8.3	-	-	41	18.2
2.	Resident Doctors	2	0.8	2	0.8	-	-	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	2	0.8	8	3.3	4	3.3	-	-	18	7.4
4.	Nurses	30	13.2	66	28.9	32	14.0	7	3.0	135	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	2	0.8	8	3.3	2	0.8	-	-	12	5.0
6.	Pharmacists	4	1.7	8	3.3	8	3.3	-	-	20	8.3
	Total	49	21.4	105	45.4	69	29.7	7	3.0	230	100

TABLE 9. Where Do You Normally Get Your Professional Information?

S/N		HOSPITAL LIBRARY	PERSONAL COLLECTION	OTHER LIBRARIES	FROM COLLEAGUES	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	13.34	5.8	24.61	10.7	1.84	0.8	184	0.8	41.67	18.2
2.	Resident Doctors	1.04	0.8	2	1.84	-	-	-	-	3.68	1.7
3.	House officers	11.5	5.0	1.84	0.8	1.84	0.8	1.84	0.8	17.02	7.4.
4.	Nurses	5.3.13	23.1	48	21.5	7.59	3.3	26.68	11.6	136	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	7.59	3.3	3.91	1.7	-	-	-	-	11.5	5.0
6.	Pharmacists	3.91	1.7	11.5	5.0	-	-	3.68	1.7	19.09	8.3
	Total	92	39.7	93	40.5	11	4.9	34	14.9	230	100

TABLE 11. How Would You Rate The Medical Information Available To You in Terms Of Timeliness, Accuracy, Accessible And Professional Friendly?

	TIMELINESS	ACCURACY	ACCESSIBLE	PROFESSIONAL FRIENDLY	TOTAL
NO	61	50	54	65	230
%	26.4	22.1	23.4	28.1	100

TABLE 12. Do You Agree That The Aforementioned Problems Have Affected Your Professional Performance?

S/N		S A	A	DS	S D	TOTAL					
	Respondents	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Consultants	5	2.5	29	12.4		3.3	-	-	42	18.2
2.	Residents Doctors	2	0.8	2	0.8	-	-	-	-	4	1.7
3.	House officers	4	1.7	9	4.1	2	0.8	2	0.8	17	7.4
4.	Nurses	27	11.6	79	34.7	30	13.2	-	-	137	59.5
5.	Lab. Scientists	-	-	9	4.1	2	0.8	-	-	11	5.0
6.	Pharmacists	4	1.7	13	5.8	2	0.8	-	-	19	8.3
	Total	42	18.3	142	61.9	44	18.9	2	0.8	230	100