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Research at the University of York St John

Meeting the Challenges of Clinical Information Provision

Abstract

This virtual issue of the *Health Information and Libraries Journal (HILJ)* has been compiled to mark the *5th International Clinical Librarian Conference 2011*. In considering the challenges of clinical information provision, the content selected for the virtual issue offers an international flavour of clinical information provision and covers a variety of different facets of clinical librarianship. The issue broadly covers the areas of information needs and preferences, clinical librarian roles and services, and education and training, and reflects the way in which a normal issue of the *HILJ* would be presented. This includes a review article, a collection of original articles, and the three regular features which comprise *International Perspectives and Initiatives*, *Learning and Teaching in Action*, and *Using Evidence in Practice*. All papers included in this virtual issue are available free online.

Editorial

To mark the *5th International Clinical Librarian Conference 2011*[1], this virtual issue has been compiled to reflect the subject of clinical information. This virtual issue draws together a collection of key papers published over the previous two years in the *Health Information and Libraries Journal (HILJ)* that have made significant contributions to the research and literature base of clinical librarianship. The virtual issue is freely available online and presents a collection of high quality papers in the same format a normal issue of the *HILJ* would usually take. This includes a review, original articles, and the three regular features of *HILJ* which comprise *International Perspectives and Initiatives*, *Learning and Teaching in Action*, and *Using Evidence in Practice*.

In considering the challenges of clinical information provision, the content selected for the virtual issue covers different facets of clinical librarianship and broadly cover the areas of information needs and preferences, clinical librarian roles and services, and education and training. In honour of the *5th International Clinical Librarian Conference 2011*[1] the contents selected for this virtual issue also, we feel, offer a truly international flavour.

It is both fitting and timely having been published in the first 2011 issue of *HILJ*, the review paper[2] chosen for this virtual issue is the most current and comprehensive review of clinical

librarian services to date. This paper by Brettle et al[2] conveys the results of a rigorous systematic review examining a wide variety of aspects of clinical librarianship including perceptions of services, and models, quality and methods of services. Four clear models of clinical librarian service provision are identified by the review, and the study provides details of some very interesting and successful outcomes. This paper also paves the way by providing the relevant tools and skills for other clinical librarians to complete their own service evaluations, thereby contributing to the developing body of evidence on the impact of clinical librarian services.

In the context of information needs and preferences, Davies[3] in her 2009 paper, considers the frequency of clinical information needs expressed by doctors. In this study, Davies carried out a fascinating study which aimed to quantify the information needs of doctors in clinical settings by using clinical librarians themselves as the method for data collection. UK clinical librarians counted the number of questions asked by doctors in clinical settings. It was concluded that clinical librarians based within clinical teams had the largest exposure to clinical questions and therefore can have the most impact in terms of the provision of information to support clinical care.

Barley et al[4] consider clinical information provision in the context of a mental health clinical question answering service in their 2009 paper. The impetus for this study came from the difficulties reported in the literature of applying research evidence to clinical practice. The study evaluated the service using a focus group methodology and concentrating specifically on preferences identified by the clinicians for the question answering service. A key concluding message of the study is the preference by clinicians for critically appraised and summarised research evidence to be a feature of clinical-question answering services.

Clinical-question answering services are an area also considered by McGowan et al[5] in their 2010 paper in which they describe an evidence based 'just in time librarian consultation service' for primary care clinicians in Ottawa, Canada. In this article they evaluate the success of a service which used hand held devices to turnaround the delivery of responses to clinical questions in under 15 minutes. The article provides some particularly useful flowcharts which demonstrate the process of clinical question answering in context with the service and which are likely to be of enormous benefit to other clinical librarians considering introducing a similar service.

Whitmore et al[6] in their 2008 case study report, evaluated the informationist programme at the Library of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethseda, USA. Their results were

achieved through a survey of NIH scientists receiving health informationist services, and supported by interviews. In their conclusions to the study, the authors identify a positive outcome and particularly identified the time-saving aspect of the service which was reported as being most valuable to the informationist service users.

In the context of the role of the clinical librarian, Harrison and Berquet[7] build on previous studies with their 2010 analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the clinical librarian. The 3rd International Clinical Librarian Conference gave opportunity to survey clinical librarians, and the resulting data was then used by the researchers to develop a model, primarily for the UK, identifying the key skills and activities which define the role of the clinical librarian. The authors call for greater use of performance measures to evaluate and demonstrate the value of clinical librarian services.

In relation to education and training, as identified in the study by Harrison and Berquet[7] critical appraisal is a key role of the clinical librarian. Maden-Jenkins[8] considers this aspect of clinical librarianship in her 2010 paper which looked at the delivery of critical appraisal training by healthcare librarians. The research study used a survey as a method of data collection to consider the levels of involvement healthcare librarians have in critical appraisal, together with the associated issues and debates. This is an interesting study which provides some encouraging and positive results for the continued development of critical appraisal skills in healthcare librarians.

The regular features are always last but not least in any issue of *HILJ*, and the selections for the regular features for this virtual issue begin with a piece by Jeanette Murphy[9] for the *International Perspectives and Initiatives* feature. In this piece she presents an interesting narrative on the relationship between health sciences librarianship and health informatics and in which she compares and contrasts the two. Elsewhere, in the *Learning and Teaching in Action* feature, Craig[10] considers the links between high quality health care delivery and the issue of information literacy in the context of NHS Scotland Knowledge Services. And finally, in the *Using Evidence in Practice* feature, Andrew Booth[11] postulates on the evaluation of clinical librarian services, suggesting that developments within health research which aim to evaluate complex interventions may be a key consideration in providing an alternative approach to the evaluation of clinical librarian services.

The International Clinical Librarian Conference, now in its tenth year, and delivering its fifth event brings together clinical librarians and LIS researchers from all over the World. The conference has a first class reputation and is held in high esteem by clinical librarians,

information professionals and researchers on a global level. It has been highly successful in stimulating professional debate, providing a myriad of networking opportunities, and offering the chance to share research and good practice to contribute to the continual development and improvement of the practice of clinical librarianship. We hope that this virtual issue will both support and enrich the knowledge sharing experience that the conference will offer to its delegates. In this special, virtual issue of *HILJ* we invite all to celebrate with us the role of clinical librarianship and the enormous contribution it has made over its lifetime, to the provision of high quality health care.

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