

Utilization Of Hospital Library By Health Workers In A Tertiary Health Institution In Ilorin, Kwara State.

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Abstract

The task of providing quality health care services require the use of current health information; and hospital library seems to be the most appropriate source of organized and well articulated information for health workers. This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out between January and June 2003 to determine the use of hospital library by health workers at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital with a view to generating data that can be used to improve the services and make the library more user friendly to the health workers.

Analysis of 280 questionnaires returned by consenting health workers selected through simple random sampling showed that 244(87%) of the respondents used the library, and a significant proportion of the Doctors were found to use the library facilities more than any group of health professionals (p value <0.05). Although reading of library textbooks was the commonest service often sought by the users (80%), reading of newspapers / magazines for recreational purpose was common among the health workers (65.6%). Most of the health workers 176(72%) felt that relevant / current textbooks were not available and 156(64%) said current journals were inadequate; while majority expressed difficulty in accessing Medline service, medical video cassettes and photocopiers in the library.

Non-availability of the required services and lack of academic challenges that require using the hospital library were some of the excuses given by those who do not use the facility. The constraints facing the library users were mostly related to lack of current books and journals, poor Medline service and short hours of service during the weekend. There is a need to strengthen the hospital library by extending the hours of service to the users, subscribing to various medical journals and procurement of current and relevant books so that the operational goals and aspiration of the Teaching hospital in terms of quality service, teaching and research can be achieved through medical library.

Keywords: Utilization, Hospital library, Health workers.

Introduction

Information is an important concern to indi-

viduals and the society for necessary progress and development. The kind of information sought by individuals and group depend on field of study and interest.

There are several sources of information but the need for organized and well-articulated information makes library the most appropriate source for the individual and organization¹. Hospitals are so unique in providing health care services, therefore, a life sustaining task of this nature require the use of current information materials. The knowledge possessed by health workers tends to decline or become out-dated over time after their basic training largely because of technological advancement and emergence of new diseases and concepts in health care delivery². Appropriate learning materials are therefore essential for maintaining and updating the knowledge and skills of health workers.

The difference between medical library and other types of libraries is evident in the collection and the clientele. The users of hospital library are predominantly health workers, but patients who are hospitalized for a long time also have needs for library use for recreational activities that would contribute to good health habits and improved knowledge^{2,4}.

A well-equipped medical library is indispensable for teaching and specialist hospitals where the use of up-to-date knowledge and skills are required in providing quality service, training and research. The University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital library was established in 1991 and has been providing uninterrupted services to staff members. Twelve years after its establishment there is a need to evaluate services provided; hence the study was carried out to determine the utilization of the library by health workers in the hospital with a view to gathering useful information that would be used to improve services of the institution and enhance better utilization.

Methodology

This descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital between January and June 2003 focused on trained health workers in different clinical departments / units of the hospital. The total staff strength in clinical departments / units was about 1,656 as at the time of the study; and Fisher formula³ was used to arrive at a sample size of 320. Pre-tested questionnaires were distributed to all units and departments for respondents to self-

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administered and return through appointed research assistants. The questionnaires contained questions that elicited information on use of the hospital library and respondents' opinion and view about the services rendered by the library.

A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed to the staff in their various units / departments taking into consideration the relative proportion of staff strength in each clinical department. Two hundred and eighty questionnaires were properly filled and returned giving a response rate of 80%. The Nursing services which has the highest number of staff strength recorded the lowest response rate. The data generated on the questionnaires were analyzed using the EPI-INFO computer software to produce frequency tables and chi-square analysis. Level of significant was set at p value <0.05 .

Results

Two Hundred and eighty (280) questionnaires were analyzed and majority of the respondents 170(60.7%) were males and the females were 110(39.3%). One hundred and fifty-two (54.3%) re-

Table 1: Respondents' age distribution, profession and years of work experience in the hospital.

Age group (Years)	Frequency(%)
< 26	36(12.9)
26-30	76(27.0)
31-35	80(28.5)
36-40	36(12.9)
41-45	32(22.4)
> 45	20(7.2)
Total	280(100.0)
Respondents' profession	Frequency(%)
Doctor	120(42.9)
Nurses/Midwives	80(28.6)
Laboratory Technologist/Technician	24(8.6)
Pharmacists	20(7.1)
Other Paramedics*	36(12.8)
Total	280(100.0)
Work Experience in the Hospital	Frequency(%)
< 5 years	96(34.3)
5-10 years	116(41.4)
> 10 years	68(24.3)
Total	280(100.0)

* Other paramedics=Health record officers, Community Health Officers, Physiotherapist and Medical Social Workers

spondents were married, 124(44.3%) were single while 4(1.4%) were widows. Their age ranged between

Table 2: Respondents' last visit to UITH Library and services usually sought

Last visit (in days)	Frequency(%)
< 11	124(50.8)
11-20	28(11.5)
21-30	20(8.2)
> 30	72(29.5)
Total	244(100.0)
Services sought	Frequency(%)
Textbooks	196(80.3)
Newspapers/Magazine	160(65.6)
Reading of personal books	136(55.7)
Journals	92(37.7)
Medline search	76(31.4)
Video cassettes	8(3.3)
*n=244	
*Multiple responses	

23years and 47 years with a mean age of 32 ± 5.5 years. The respondents' professions and years of service in the hospital are shown on Table 1.

Two-third of the health workers have worked for over 5years in the hospital, and this may indicate low turn over rate among staff in the establishment. The rest one-third respondents have worked for less than 5years in the hospital, and most of them, if not all, were recruited or transferred from other health institutions in the last 5years.

Most of the respondents 244(87.1%) used the library while the remaining 36(12.9%) never used it. Out of the 244 health workers that ever used the library less than half (49.2%) do so frequently while 124(50.8%) utilized the facility occasionally. Also about half of them 124(50.8%) used the library within the past 10 days before completing the questionnaire, while 72(29.5%) had visited the library well over 30 days prior to filling the questionnaire. The services often sought for at the library included reading of library's textbooks, reading of personal books, reading of magazine / newspaper and Medline search (Table 2).

Analysis of respondents' profession in relation to ever use of library showed no significant difference between the various professions. However, doctors were observed to use the facility more frequently than any other groups, and this was statistically significant (p value 0.01) (Table 3). Most of the respondents 176(72.1%) felt that relevant textbooks for their discipline were not available and 156(64%) felt that current journals were inadequate. As many as 128(52.5%) respondents said access to Medline facility was difficult in the library (Table 4).

Table 3: Respondents' profession by use of the hospital library

A. Respondents' profession in relation to library use			
Profession	Use of library		Total
	Yes	No	
Doctors	110(92.0)	10(8)	120
Nurses/Midwives	71(89)	9(11)	80
Laboratory Technologist/Technician	20(83)	4(17)	24
Pharmacists	16(80)	4(20)	20
Other Paramedics	27(75)	9(25)	36
Total	244	36	280
$X^2=8.34$, $df=4$, $p\text{-value}=0.800$			
B. Respondents' profession in relation to how often they use the library			
Profession	Frequency of library use		Total
	Frequently	Occasionally	
Doctors	82(75)	28(25)	110
Nurses/Midwives	15(21)	56(79)	71
Laboratory Technologist/Technician	8(40)	12(60)	20
Pharmacists	5(31)	11(69)	16
Other Paramedics	10(37)	17(63)	27
Total	120	124	244
$X^2=54.15$, $df=4$, $p\text{-value}=0.0000001$			

Table 4a: Availability of relevant/current textbooks

Availability	Frequency(%)
Yes	176(72.1)
Don't Know	52(31.3)
Total	16(6.6)
	244(100)

Table 4b: Adequacy of relevant/current journals

Adequacy of journals	Frequency(%)
Inadequate	156(64.0)
Adequate	44(18.0)
Don't know	44(18.0)
Total	244(100.0)

Majority of the respondents who make use of the library 148(60.7%) said that the atmosphere of the library was good for reading while 60(24.6%) felt it was poor. Also, the services of the library were rated good by 160(65.6%) and poor by 40(16.4%) respondents who

Table 4c: Access to available medical video cassettes

Accessibility	Frequency(%)
Easy	8(3.3)
No access	24(9.8)
Difficult	80(32.8)
Don't know	132(54.1)
Total	244(100)

used the facility. However, the view expressed by re-

Table 4d: Access to facility for Medline search

Accessibility	Frequency(%)
Easy	44(18.)
No access	128(52.5)
Difficult	52(21.3)
Don't know	20(8.2)
Total	244(100.0)

spondents who make use of the library frequently on atmosphere and efficiency of the library was significantly different from what was expressed by those who

Table 4e: Access to facility for photocopying

Accessibility	Frequency(%)
Easy	44(18.0)
No access	100(41.0)
Difficult	16(6.6)
Don't know	84(34.4)
Total	244(100.0)

library 9(25%), time constraints 7(19.4%), lack of academic challenges that require going to the library 5(13.9%) and lack of loan facility in the library. The major constraints faced by health workers who used the library included: lack of current textbooks and journals, poor Medline services, poor cataloguing system and poor weekend services in that order of frequency (Table 6). Extending the opening hours of the library on weekends and provision of Medline and Internet services that are easily accessible were some of the suggestions given by the respondents to improve on the library services

A. Atmosphere of the Library

Conduciveness	Use of library		Total
	Frequently	Occasionally	
Poor	20	40	60
Good	68	80	148
Excellent	32	4	36
Total	120	124	244

$$X^2=7.34, df=2, p\text{-value}=0.02547$$

B. Efficiency of Library services in relation to library use

Profession	Use of library		Total
	Frequently	Occasionally	
Poor	28	12	40
Good	72	88	160
Excellent	20	24	44
Total	120	124	244

$$X^2= 8.30, df=2, p\text{-value}=0.01576$$

Table 6a: Obstacles to effective use of the library (Multiple: n=280)

Obstacles	Frequency(%)
Lack of current textbooks/journals	187(67.0)
Poor medline service	174(62.0)
Poor cataloguing	143(51.0)
Poor weekend services	84(30.0)
Poor/non-conducive sitting arrangement	17(6.0)
Distraction caused by Noise around the library	11(4.0)

occasionally used the library, p value<0.05 (Table 5).

The reason for not using the library at all as expressed by the 36 respondents included: non availability of the required services 12(33.3%), preference for alternative

Table 6b: Suggestions on improvement of library services/ facilities (Multiple responses: n=280)

Obstacles	Frequency(%)
Extend duration of service on weekend	76(27.0)
Subscription to medical journals	120(43.0)
Provision of Internet service	20(7.0)
Stocking of current and relevant textbooks	92(33.0)
Ensure reliable Medline search service	137(49.0)
Relocate/expand the Library	8(3.0)

(Table 6).

Discussion

In this study, most of the health workers (87% used the library, and about half of this group used the

facility regularly. The utilization rate recorded here was similar to 86% utilization rate reported in another study carried out in Lagos⁴. Doctors were found to use the library more than any group of health professionals and this is also consistent with findings from Lagos study conducted among health professionals in which physicians, mostly resident doctors, were reported to use and seek information from the library than other professionals⁵.

The commonest service often sought for at the hospital library by most of the library users was reading of the library textbooks. This type of information seeking in the library was similarly reported among agricultural Engineers where it was found that most of them prefer to use textbooks for their information search in the library⁶. However, use of the hospital library for recreational purpose was also common among the health workers. As much as two-thirds of the health workers were in the hospital library to read news papers and magazine which is a form of re-creational activity, and this was also reported to be a common practice among health workers in Lagos⁵.

Non-availability of relevant and / or current textbooks and journals that characterized most medical libraries in Nigeria^{4,5} was similarly observed in this study as evident by the negative responses from the health workers on the availability and adequacy of books and journals that are relevant to their disciplines / professions. Also, access to medical videocassettes, Medline search and photocopy services were described as inadequate or difficult by majority of the respondents. This may not be unconnected with limited numbers of machines / equipments available to provide services easily. Also, the existing bureaucracy attached to the provision of some of these services could make accessibility difficult too.

Reports from other literatures have indicated that useful books, journals and other information materials such as Medline search, internet services and photocopiers are often kept in offices of the Chief Executives in some institutions or in the Librarian's office where they may not be readily accessible to users, thus defeating the purpose for which the information materials were primarily meant for^{2,7}. This observation partly characterized the operational set up of the hospital library and could be responsible for the difficulty expressed by the health workers in accessing the services.

Inadequate funding of hospital libraries has been reported in several studies as a major constraint in the provision of adequate and relevant books, journals and other information materials relating to medical field^{2,4,5,8}. This has left many libraries to have empty shelves or few books, most of which are too old and torn due to over use. The struggle to acquire and maintain current information materials has not been matched by the financial requirement involved. The availability of adequate funds is believed to have positive effect on

hospital library services^{1, 2,4}. The main reasons expressed by the health workers who didn't use the library were non-availability of the required services and preference for other alternative library within the hospital premises. The former reason has been confirmed based on responses given by those who actually used the library; while the alternative library mentioned is probably the medical school library that is under the control of the University authority.

The major obstacles against effective use of the hospital library by the health workers in this study were lack of current textbooks and journals, poor Medline and cataloguing services and limited opening hours of service on weekends. While some of these obstacles are consistent with what other studies have reported, some were the contrary. For example, non-availability of current journals, poor staff attitudes and lack of library loan facilities were reported as major militating factors to effective use of library by scientists and technologists⁹. Other studies have reported poor hospital library accommodation², poor equipment for speedy handling of electronic information¹⁰, poor budgetary allocation to libraries^{2,10} and poor integration of hospital library services into the health care system thus leading to poor services² as factors affecting the effective functionality of the hospital libraries. Availability of few current journals and books in the library implies low access to current information that is much needed for a tertiary health institution to achieve its goal of quality service, training and research.

Most of the suggestions listed by the health workers are reasonable and practicable. Although some of these suggestions require that the funding of the hospital library be improved so that basic information material needs can be procured, other suggestions can be implemented after a thorough review of the existing policy relating to library services especially those relating to access to available information materials and duration of hours of service on weekends.

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