Breaching the library walls in Brazil
Clinical Librarianship in Celso Pierro Hospital: a pilot study

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Rationale for study

Building the Brazilian Bridge (BBB) is an ongoing Project that began in 2005 and reflects the successful collaboration between researchers from the UK and Brazil. From the beginning the purpose of this project is to develop the concept of Clinical Librarianship (CL) in General Hospitals in Sao Paulo State, including a pilot implementation in the University Teaching Hospital at PUC-Campinas.

The project has been recently enriched with information from scoping both the UK and USA Clinical Librarian experiences, the results of this work are due to be orally presented at this ICML. BBB is a multifaceted project that requires various actions at short and medium terms.

Objective

To develop a pilot project to establish a clinical librarianship service for the University Teaching Hospital at PUC-Campinas.

Method

The participants of this pilot study are academics, medical librarians and clinical members / Doctors and Surgeons of the Orthopaedics Department in the University Teaching Hospital at PUC-Campinas.

Two aspects of the BBB project were addressed by different methodologies:

- Training and Education of Librarians

A one day workshop for library participants involved in the project was held in October 2008. Following the workshop all participants were invited to complete a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the workshop via evaluation form on line. The participants were selected by their managers and were drawn from 32 professional staff. Fifteen librarians attended the workshop, seven were health librarians.
An experienced librarian was invited from BIREME (Latin-American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information), to lead the workshop.

- Practical Experiences of the CL Pilot Scheme.
In June 2008 a professional Librarian began working with the Orthopaedic team at the University Hospital. A qualitative approach has been used to gather his opinion of the pilot service to date.

Results

The BBB Project actions completed include:

1. a research proposal is outlined and ready to be sent to the University’s Ethics Committee seeking its approval;

2. an Orthopaedics medical team (with 5 teaching staff, 40 clinicians, and 15 resident doctors) was identified and one professional librarian has been working with them since June 2008;

3. the Pilot Scheme in Orthopaedics with professional librarian is going well and according to plan; his work has been increasingly recognized as valuable by the other professionals in the health team;

4. a one-day workshop on electronic databases search strategies was organized through the BBB Project to inform the university librarians working with health users.

5. the project has “inspired”/encouraged two undergraduate library students to work on this subject in their final year projects.

Librarian Education and Training

The results from the medical librarians were:
1- They are not familiar with medical research designs (randomized controlled trial, cohort study, cross-over study etc) although they know some specific terms such as systematic review of literature, evidence-based medicine.

2- They are not aware of the concept of ‘critical appraisal’. Only one professional demonstrated some understanding, he said it is the use of rigorous methods to evaluate a scientific paper. It seems that there is confusion in understanding critical appraisal and the use of filters in search strategies to get the best evidence amongst the Librarians.

3- All librarians attending the workshop informed that, despite their wish, they feel uncomfortable and not professionally prepared to work with health teams searching the best scientific evidence, as well as this they feel uneasy with medical terms and medical routines. They are also afraid and worried of not being accepted by medical teams professionally and seen as equals.
4- Despite not being ready for working in a hospital, these librarians are able to recognize the difference between information requested by any physician for clinical purposes from the information needed by teaching staff. The former needs exact and quick information for a patient therapeutics and diagnosis, while the latter can wait sometime before getting the information he normally needs for papers, classes or lectures.

5- The respondents did indicate they know how to use the main health and medical databases, such as Medline, PubMed, Lilacs, SciELO, Cochrane Library. Nevertheless, the librarians recognized the ongoing training need for further instruction on search strategies. It was highlighted that in general they are not familiar with sensitive and broad searches requested by systematic reviews.

6- Only one respondent stated that they would be willing to work with clinicians at PUC Hospital.

7- The participants’ final evaluation testified the success of the event as well the need for further training activities.

Pilot Clinical Librarianship Scheme Orthopaedics / Interview Findings

The interview with the professional librarian working with the Orthopedics Team at the University Hospital, revealed that he was required to perform information searches using services offered including e-bibliographic searches in national and international health databases (referential and full-text), scientific publishing monitoring, selective dissemination of information. The following health databases were appointed as frequently used on his daily routine: LILACS, MEDLINE, Cochrane Library, SciELO, Adolec, BBO, BDENF, DESASTRES, HISA, HomeoIndex, Leyes, MedCaribe, Repidisca, PAHO e WHOLIS. He also searches PUBMED; Evidence Based Medicine; EMBASE and ISI Web of Knowledge.

He is also contributing to the production of the research output for the team by editing and assisting in the writing of papers; activities include developing methodological approaches, adding in clinical cases and systematic reviews; citing relevant literature; clinical cases and systematic reviews and advising on the correct style of referencing, i.e., Vancouver.

The professional librarian is familiar with the concepts of Evidence Based Medicine, randomized controlled trials, cohort study, case-control studies, Cochrane Library and systematic review. He fully understands the concept of critical appraisal as a set of procedures necessary to assess the quality of a scientific paper under three essential aspects: internal relevance, external relevance, and statistical method. According to this librarian, with critical appraisal activities it is possible to assess what information is valid, relevant and useful to a specific knowledge field.

The librarian also indicated that he is totally autonomous to choose the way in which he works within the Orthopaedics Department and he feels that he is able to contribute to the team professionally and therefore he is confident in his actions with the health
team. He receives great support from the Director to make decisions of his own. He therefore, feels respected and valued by the clinicians in the Orthopaedic Department.

The librarian also stated that, the difference between information requested from the doctor (for his own clinical practice) and a request from a member of the teaching staff is that the former needs to be precise, concise and effective, demanding from the librarian quickness, synthesis and attention to the search. Information for lecturing staff is normally used in own research and in the formulation of theoretical and critical thinking about his own field of work, not for patient care. However, he argues that these dynamics can be modified according to the level and proportion of user’s needs.

Related to the ways he has acquired competencies, knowledge and abilities to develop these tasks, the librarian indicated that his undergraduate course on library studies “opened his eyes” for the professional practice. He has acquired theoretical and practical basis which allow him to reflect on the necessary competencies to progress to distinct and specialized information needs. According to him, his competencies came mostly from practical experience and field work in various institutions. He believes, however, that the constant professional upgrading has giving him the necessary foundations for his present activities.

Discussion

In the literature, Olivieri’s research (2004) with 225 physicians from a university hospital in Denmark showed that most of them lack knowledge of essential terms of Evidence Based Medicine (EBM), particularly those related to biostatistics and epidemiology (such as absolute risk reduction, relative risk, odds ratio etc). This could be a barrier in the use of EBM in the clinical setting considering that the problem with education and medicine and its allied professions seems to be that “professionals were not taught how to keep up with science” (Dans 2008). This echoes the findings from both CL interview in the Pilot scheme in the Orthopaedics Department in PUC Hospital and the training event held for the librarians.

Also, in the BBB project, the use of electronic databases was also found to be an area where education and training of both the librarians and clinicians would be beneficial. This again is bourn out by the literature. According to Martínez-Silveira’s findings (2005), textbooks, colleagues and scientific journals are the most used information sources, while electronic databases are barely cited. The Cochrane Library which constitutes the main known source of evidence in medicine (systematic reviews) is the least used information source by these health professionals. (Olivieri 2004).

This could be related to a medical education issue. As put by the Evidence-Based Medicine Working Group (1992), clinicians were formerly taught to look to authority (whether an expert lecturer or a senior physician) to resolve issues of patient management. On the other hand, EBM uses additional strategies, including quickly tracking down publication of studies that are directly relevant to the clinical problem, critically appraising these studies, and applying the results to a specific clinical problem.
The CL interviewed in the Pilot scheme in the Orthopaedics Department in PUC stated that it is essential for the concept of EBM to be known and fully appreciated by clinicians. The use of the CL service by the Orthopaedic team is ongoing to the great satisfaction of the Orthopaedics department. The CL seems to be considered a full professional member of the team. It is essential to spread good news about this service through the hospital. There are several stages to be achieved in ensuring EBM and the continuation of the CL service. The first is raising the importance of using good relevant health information sources amongst the clinical staff, considering that some health professionals are not familiar with relevant health information sources. Secondly to provide critically assessed data and use it in the clinical setting and finally teach critical appraisal to clinical staff.

The Future

It is clear from both the participants of pilot CL scheme and the librarians that there is sufficient interest and enthusiasm to continue the BBB project. What remains to be done is further dissemination of the value and benefits of the CL service to management to secure funding to ensure the service becomes a permanent feature of hospital teams in PUC.

References


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