Exploring information needs and information behaviour in oncology contexts: the importance of tasks, roles and organisational settings

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Introduction

- Increases – cancer: a life-threatening disease
- Cross-country studies
  - South Africa (Pretoria, Cape Town)
  - The Netherlands (Amsterdam)
- Importance of tasks, roles & organisational settings
- Growing body of literature on information behaviour + improvement of LIS services
  - Seemingly increased pressure to use information
Practical framework – contexts of LIS with potential users

- Observe the context and that there might be a need for a study
- Study subject literature, use scholarly network
- Conduct a survey, collect data
- Analyse data
- Reflect, make suggestions
- Implement
- Assess
Information needs & information behaviour

- Gap not recognised
- Gap recognised
- Bridge
- Outcome

In-spite of its complexities LIS needs to continue understanding information behaviour

Expressed as an information need
Not expressed as an information need
Improving LIS services

- Start by acknowledging that not all needs are expressed & therefore require a variety of methods to explore information behaviour
- Consider what has been published in the literature
  - Library & Information Science
  - Healthcare

Consider wider context
Improving LIS services (cont.)

- Surveys and exploratory studies – even small scale (manageable)

- Oncology contexts
  - Fourie & Bakker (2008):
    - South Africa + The Netherlands
    - The Netherlands
  - Fourie (2009): South Africa – Cape Town
Tasks & context as influencing factors in information behaviour

- Very different interests & use of information & LIS
- Many different roles & tasks in oncology healthcare
  - Can note tasks + subtasks from surveys
    - Questionnaires, checklists: useful e.g. for CAS search profiles, journal and book collection (e.g.)
Tasks & context as influencing factors in information behaviour (cont.)

- Many different roles & tasks in oncology healthcare
  - Day-to-day patients care
  - Clinical guidelines and treatment protocol
  - Patient education and counselling – important task, but not always linked to a need for information ... EXCEPT...
  - Training and education e.g. of colleagues – seems to have a stronger need for information
- Extensive specialist training in The Netherlands (cont.)
Tasks & context as influencing factors in information behaviour (cont.)

- Many different roles & tasks in oncology healthcare:
  - Staff management
  - Research: publication, reviews, post-graduate studies
  - Quality management --- marginal area for LIS service

- Other: statistical support, research (need for information on how to do this), need for general and background information, dealing with emotional burnout
Roles of interest

- Management & supervisor
- Educator
- Researcher
- Student
- Gatekeeper
Strong link between research & information needs

- Quality management, business process
- Breast cancer
- Psycho-oncology services
- Effects of cancer treatment
- Genetics and heredity
- Many other --- research interest may change
Methods

- Questionnaires
- Individual interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Literature reviews & audits of reported information needs
- Observation & participatory observation
- Task analysis
- Opportunities for suggestions
- In-house material
Impact of...

- Care models
  - Opportunities & pressure for research
- Organisational / institutional policy
  - E.g. use of alternative medicine
- Healthcare policy of country
Discussion & suggestions

- Some information needs difficult to collect through questionnaires
  - Unexpressed information needs
    - Consider expressed information needs reported by different means
    - Consider implied information needs
      - Care models, institutional policy...
Practical framework – contexts of LIS with potential users

- Observe the context and that there might be a need for a study
  - Study + monitor care models, institutional policies, etc.
- Study subject literature, use scholarly network
  - Systematic reviews of various facets & monitor literature and social networking products
- Conduct a survey, collect data
  - Regular small scale surveys, different groups, variety of methods
- Analyse data
  - Analyse data from different points of view
- Reflect, make suggestions
  - Publish papers, get feedback, discuss with users, brainstorm with LIS professionals in similar positions
- Implementation
  - Select a few options, explore options per se, implement
- Assess
  - Get feedback on implementation, evaluate, consider use of information, etc.
Thank you for your time

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