

Getting the clinical staff involved: developing infoguides as a form of outreach in the Saskatoon Health Region

Purpose

What is an effective way to reach out to staff, promote the library, showcase our skills, and get clinical staff involved in team projects with the library?

Setting

The Saskatoon Health Region (SHR) Medical Library serves 11 000 staff, physicians, and residents. With funding from the Saskatchewan Health Information Resources Partnership (SHIRP), the SHR Medical Library launched a suite of e-resources in September 2004. Following the launch, efforts were focused on increasing the visibility of the library. The library had new services, staff, and resources to offer the health region. Three objectives the library set out to accomplish were the need to (1) distinguish ourselves from what staff can find free on the Internet, (2) help staff navigate through the diversity of e-resources that they now had at their fingertips, and (3) make connections with staff to increase our profile.

Method

The library chose to develop infoguides as a means of accomplishing our three objectives. The intent was that these guides would be both an outreach and promotional vehicle for the library. The SHR Medical Library looked to University of British Columbia, McMaster, and Ottawa Hospital's subject guides as models. The resulting product was a series of portals that link staff to databases, e-journals, practice guidelines, statistics, government information, professional associations, and Web sites for their respective practice areas, thus offering staff a filtered blend of the best of free and fee-based resources.

Results

Initially, the infoguides were created independent of clinical staff input. Since then, our approach has shifted to include clinical staff input in the development and editing phases. The library contacts a clinical staff member of a particular practice area to gauge their interest in the project prior to developing an infoguide. Clinical input is contributed either through a spokesperson who (i) gathers suggestions from co-workers and relays them to us or (ii) critiques the infoguide after development and sends us feedback.

We shifted our approach to include clinical staff involvement for two reasons:

(1) We saw the outreach potential of this project. As a relatively new e-library, we were keen to market our ser-

vices, and the clinical staff seemed equally keen to work with us and contribute their ideas.

(2) It provided us with knowledge of how health professionals search for information. We could see firsthand which resources staff had been using prior to the introduction of the SHIRP suite of e-resources.

Conclusion

Seventeen infoguides for practice areas and four topic-based infoguides have been developed since September 2004. These include the following: acquired brain injury, clinical nutrition, clinical practice guidelines, complementary and alternative medicine, geriatrics, health administration, occupational therapy, orthopaedics, pharmacy, physiotherapy, psychiatry, respiratory therapy, and speech language pathology.

Several connections have been created, and library awareness has increased amongst the clinical staff. This project has led to invitations such as grand rounds and nursing education days. From a statistical viewpoint, the percentage of Web page traffic hits for the infoguides rose from 9.15% in September 2004 to 17.93% by March 2005. The development of infoguides has proven to be a successful form of outreach in a health science library setting. Outreach activities have become increasingly important in the past few years as libraries strive to respond to their clients' information needs at a pace increasingly dictated by the dynamic information landscape.

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