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Health librarians as part of the perioperative care team

Many hospitals have access to a librarian but are they being used to the best advantage?

Okay, chances are you may never find a librarian in the operating suite, unless as a patient, but they do play a vital role in enabling the work of perioperative nurses. A perioperative nurse's role can encompass a variety of tasks at the pre-operative, operative and post-operative stage and includes the daily use of information resources to ensure evidence-based practice (EBP) occurs. EBP is 'the conscientious and judicious use of current best evidence in conjunction with clinical expertise and patient values to guide health care decisions'.¹

Barriers to EBP exist at both an organisational level and a personal level. At the organisational level these barriers include workplace culture, heavy workloads, lack of human resources, lack of time, insufficient education programs, lack of organisational resources and infrastructure and lack of awareness. At a personal level barriers include lack of knowledge and skills (e.g. not understanding how to search, find, interpret and appraise information), and lack of belief, capacity, access or awareness.²⁻⁵

A librarian can help break through these barriers. But did you even know that health librarians exist? Or what they have to offer and how they can help? If the tasks you perform could be better based on evidence, or you are unsure how to access resources and the latest evidence, or just want to refresh your information-seeking skills, then partner with your health librarian to innovate and improve your workplace.

Resources

Librarians are collection specialists and can facilitate access to resources to help you perform your role. This may include subscribing to resources such as the ACORN Standards (*Standards for Perioperative Nursing in Australia*), clinical and surgical equipment user manuals, Australian Standards, medication resources (such as MIMS, Don't Rush to Crush, Australian Injectable Drugs Handbook), citation databases and full-text journals and e-books.

Part of a librarian's role is to make access to these resources seamless (no passwords needed onsite) so that you can access the latest information at the point of clinical need. Resources are generally accessible 24/7 so your needs can be met when required. Librarians also work with you as content experts to understand what resources should be included within organisational collections so that the collection reflects the current academic landscape.

Literature searches

Perioperative nurses often undertake work to update practices and processes, inquire about specific clinical cases, develop new policies, partake in research or project work, apply for grants and upskill via professional development or education initiatives. Much of this work requires a search of the literature to see what the latest evidence is on a topic. Anyone can google, but not everyone knows how to identify the most relevant, timely

and credible sources. As expert searchers, health librarians excel in this area and can work with you and undertake a search on your behalf or guide you through a self-directed search.

Databases can be complex and how subjects are described or indexed differs depending on which country you're in and what database you are searching. Multiple sources often need to be searched to find the required information specific to each situation. A health librarian understands these nuances and can tailor a search to your specific needs. This can be followed up with accessing the full text articles for you to peruse or they can obtain articles not readily available from other libraries within their networks.

Librarians may be able to help critically appraise and synthesise the evidence for particular situations and become part of wider project teams where their skills are highly valued. Librarians also act as knowledge brokers across the organisation. As librarians work with all clinical domains across a health service they are often aware of what other projects are happening and they can connect you with others undertaking similar tasks.

Education and training

Librarians are information literacy experts who possess curricular design and instruction skills and are able to teach the information skills associated with EBP. This can be in a formal or informal capacity. Health librarians teach EBP via one-on-one instruction, small group classes, workshops and online instruction.

A librarian can attend a staff meeting to give an overview of services, they can help staff download apps (such as MIMS), or they can teach information literacy skills such as how to search specific databases or how to use particular software (like EndNote).

Library spaces are often available to staff 24/7 and include access to librarians who can provide guidance on resources, technology and project or research activities on the spot. Library spaces often include training rooms, general access computers and study spaces so that work can be undertaken away from busy clinical areas and time can be allocated to complete tasks.

Consumer health and patient information

Understanding the needs and requirements of consumers is imperative for perioperative nurses. Librarians can aid in finding suitable information for consumers that complies with the NSQHS Standard for Health Literacy, ensuring information uses appropriate language and comes from a credible and reliable source. Librarians can also assist in helping find appropriate information in languages other than English. Many of the databases libraries subscribe to contain patient information and in some instances this can be tailored for local use.

Getting the right information into the right hands is critical to the success of surgery so why not have a conversation with your health librarian and be proactive about EBP in your workplace today.

References

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