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EFFECTIVE USE OF MEDICAL LIBRARY: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO QUALITY MEDICAL CARE.

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Abstract

The library is always known to be the warehouse of resources in terms of books and non-book materials. This paper generally discussed the medical library which is a library that is found or situated in any health related establishment, as well as the resources and services obtainable from it. It also emphasized on the need to provide varied information services and ICTs resources in the delivery of qualitative Medicare to clients of these libraries. The paper also stressed why medical libraries should be used effectively thereby giving that qualitative approach to quality Medical care services to her clients.

Key words: Medical library, Medical Library Use, Medical Care, Qualitative Medical Care

Introduction

The medical library as the name implies, is health and medically related. They are libraries that are established in the medical institutions, ministries of health, health agencies, hospitals, teaching hospitals and other health institutions, among others, as stated by Okeke, Eze & Ani (2019). Medical library being a type of special library has a lot to offer to its clients as its own approach to quality Medicare services to her clients. It is a library that is charged with the provision as well as control of Medical information systems. Oguonu (2012) defined the medical

library as libraries created to support their parent institutions by meeting the information needs of their medical personnel, staff and researchers seeking information about specific diseases, diagnoses, or treatments, which affect either their own health or clients. Aside medical practitioners who use the medical library, lawyers also use it to consult materials on some forensic cases they have in court as stated by Okeke, Eze, Eze and Asogwa (2017). In fact, the authors continued that, forensic medicine and medical jurisprudence are major areas of specialization for lawyers and doctors today and they need a sound medical library for their study and research. Okeke and Ani (2021), defined the medical library as libraries established in health organizations and institutions which are charged with the responsibility of given health information services to their users. The medical library as stated by Ezukwuoke and Okereke (2016) is an information laboratory that presents one of the most important channels for new information entering into the medical institution. The authors maintained that it provides evidence to validate current scientific generalizations and the bases upon which to build new ideas.

Purposes of Medical Library

These libraries which are known to be libraries established in hospitals, health institutions and health agencies have a purpose for its establishment. These purposes are to assist physicians, health professionals, students, patients and medical researchers in finding health and scientific information to improve, update, and access or evaluate healthcare (Ebong, 2012). Some institutions have included medical informatics progressively into the four years of the medical school curriculum. Example is the Erasmus University in The Netherlands. There are core services expected of these libraries in order to enhance quality Medicare. These services as suggested by Ullah (2006), are for the success of the medical library whereby cooperation among

medical libraries should be the first. The author maintained that library cooperation among medical libraries will not only grant success in future programs but also help users of these libraries attain their information needs height. The author made the following suggestions pertaining medical library cooperation for the success of any future program of cooperation among them:

- A central body, like College of Physician and Surgeons (CPS), should develop a Health Sciences Library Portal. Medical libraries should take responsibility to feed their journal holdings on this portal. They should also keep it up to date. Medical libraries should put their catalogue of library collection online and links to these catalogues should be provided on this portal.
- A document delivery section should be established in medical libraries, as it will be difficult for Librarian to allocate time every day for resource sharing out of routine work of the library. The staff of this section will be responsible to copy/scan the article or chapter from book and send these in response to requests. They will also be responsible to place request to libraries for article and other information required by their members, not available in their library. In this regard, The Medical and Dental Council (MDC) may require this for medical institutions.
- The Medical Librarians at state/regional levels can share the load of subscription of medical journals and reference books. The Librarians of that region should meet once a year or so to decide what they can share as well as to decide the specific cataloguing standard to be used.
- College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPS) may start a diploma course and specialization in medical librarianship in collaboration with WHO.

- Medical libraries who have no organized resource sharing system due to the absence of proper planning, lack of competent manpower, limited application of information and communications technology and absence of standards, should endeavor to do so. MDC and CPS must play a leading role in developing cooperation among medical libraries and producing standards and cooperative tools like medical library portal and Document Delivery System in the medical libraries. The proper training of medical librarian and promotion incentives are also necessary for the improvement of medical library services.

Benefits of Medical Library Services

In medical librarianship, one of the key parameters for measuring the benefits from library service is the impact it has on improving patient care (Weightman & Williamson, 2005). Identifying the way to demonstrate this benefit to users, managers, and funding bodies is a challenge. Improving access to, and use of, training and research programmes has been one aspect of those programmes. Ogunbode (2004) stated that, "every country should aim at improving the health of its citizens and plan to expand outreach annually." The World Health Organization (1987) reveals that nearly all developing countries are signatories to international declarations on the promotion of health care delivery.

Improving health communication by information managers calls for a variety of approaches, which includes:

- Improving access to health materials.
- Emphasis on readability and comprehension in these materials; e.g., journals, instruction guides, books, websites, among others, and

- The use of non-written materials such as charts, diagrams, photographs, picture books, audio and videotapes, multimedia presentations, and so on (Weldon 2005).

Health literacy, as defined by Burnham and Peterson (2005), is, "the ability to obtain, read, comprehend, and use health information to make appropriate decisions." The development of appropriate and effective health communication has two main goals: to increase the role of information in the quality of healthy life and to eliminate disparities in health and health information among people and groups (Alpi & Bibel in Adio, Akewukereke, & Ibitoye, 2007)). The Library plays an important role in the dissemination of health information and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Therefore, librarians should strive to meet the health needs of the community.

Ogunbode (2004) describes demographics as the key determinant of appropriate strategies for good health. Others are the health problem profiles and available resources (human and material, especially infrastructure, equipment, drugs, etc.). It is regrettable that a majority of the population of Nigeria (60-80%) live and work in villages and rural areas where there too few health professionals. Some rural dwellers rarely come in contact with any health professional. For national health care to improve, health professionals must be encouraged to serve areas where the population is greatest and occurrence of diseases highest. In lieu of this, Federal and State University Teaching Hospitals in Nigeria were established to provide the best possible health care delivery to Nigerians in general and to those in its catchments areas in particular. Furthermore, the existence of medical libraries in such hospitals go a long way to assist their users. Dervin (2005) supports Ogunbode's assertion that in order to reduce health disparities, it is vulnerable communities must be reached quickly; Libraries can reach out to these vulnerable communities by making health information accessible at the point of need;

Health sciences libraries' missions include subscribing to journals (print or electronic) and databases, purchasing books, and providing access to these resources through their websites; One current issue for librarians is the continuous increase in costs of subscriptions to journals and databases; The average price of a scientific periodical title was \$1,818 in 2016 versus \$1,289 in 2011, with an annual inflation rate of 6%. The selection of journal subscriptions highly depends on the budgets of the establishment.

Not with standing, Ogunbade (2004) indicates that the philosophy is simple: "to produce health professionals who are responsive to the needs of the community they serve." The objectives of the medical library are inevitably tied to the objectives of its parent institution. Garfield (1985 in Ogunbade 2004) made it clear when he stated that, "Medical libraries are established to provide services and information resources to support and advance the mission to patient care, research and bio-medical education for health institutions." The library's position within an organization is therefore strategic and pivotal. It is key to the success and indeed to the very existence of an enterprise. Abels, Gogdil, and Zach (2002 in Okeke & Ani, 2016) stated that in their research, "it is no over statement to say that whatever may be the future, the services of information provision will continue to be an essential instrument of human welfare." Likewise, Margetson (2002 in Okeke & Ani, 2016) recognizes the importance of dynamic access to information.

In the Nigerian health sector, there is an urgent improve library resources and managerial effectiveness. Medical libraries are established to meet health information needs. These cover a broad area of life. Medical information professionals must consider the role they play in society and their impact on that society. De Gennaro (1984 in Ogunbade 2004) predicted correctly that, "there is the need to evaluate medical libraries, because in no distant

time, the excellence and usefulness of a library will be measured not only by the state and quality of its collections, but also by the range of resources that its staff are able to deliver to users by conventional and electronic means from a growing variety of services. Users will no longer ask what the library has, but what it can provide."

Intellectual Approach of the Medical Library

It is the wish of every library to satisfy or rather attain the information needs of her clients. The medical library as a form of special library is not left out here. This is because she has a role to play to achieve its purpose of establishment. These roles of the medical library as enumerated by Walzer, Stott, and Sutton (2000) in Weldon (2005) include the following:

- Provision of current information to users in a quick and cost effective manner
- Provision of balanced perspective on medical issues
- Provision of alternatives to formal learning in form of material support for continuing medical education
- Provision of value services, which improves information delivery
- Dissemination of health information and promotion of healthy lifestyles
- Satisfying the health information needs of the community
- Locating and assisting in the development of relevant information or materials
- Pairing information outreach with other activities in which the populations already engaged e.g. workshops, conferences, community events etc. and

- Integrating health information into ongoing programmes of the target population in the community, thereby empowering members of the health community libraries, which are currently declining in some countries.

On the part of journals subscription, it is advisable that each medical library and their establishment should be responsible for its own subscription strategy. This is because, the journal subscriptions are heterogeneous among health related organizations, and their adequacy in meeting the needs of these library users is unclear. It is clear that health literature plays important informative role to the users. This is supported by Okeke, Eze & Ani (2019) when they assert that physicians admitted that answers to their questions from literature provided new information, refreshed their memory regarding details or facts; or substantiated previous knowledge or beliefs thereby improving their confidence in their health decisions. It has also improved the services rendered by General Practitioners (GP).

The General practice which is also known as family medicine, is defined as “an academic and scientific discipline, with its own educational content, research, evidence base and clinical activity, and a clinical specialty orientated to primary care” (Oguonu, 2012). In many countries, according to Ullah (2006), academic general practitioners are engaged in scholarly activity and, thus, may have specific requirements for access to discipline-specific journals. Previous studies have assessed the needs of general practitioners but have focused on online access, the role of practice libraries, or nonacademic general practitioners’ preferences regarding type of information sources.

Conclusion

Medical library services ensure that health care providers have access to authoritative, accessible, reliable, relevant, accurate and timely published information that enhances the quality of care given to patients. Medical libraries are catalysts for professional activities of the medical professionals as they aid in the cure of ailments as well as that of health information within the health institution. The medical library of the teaching hospitals basic objectives is not only the provision of resources and services but also ensuring that these resources are properly utilized. In line with this, the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria [(MDCN), 2018] maintained that the medical library unit should be responsible for keeping records of all books, gazettes, journals and magazines; arranging all books, journals, magazines, gazettes and other materials orderly for easy retrieval; receiving and documenting of items ordered/donated on delivery; guiding users on retrieval of information; and listing and keeping of items in archive. In lieu of this, hospital administrators, librarians, and accrediting bodies should ensure that medical libraries have the resources and services needed to effectively meet their needs for knowledge-based information. By so doing, effective use of medical library is unavoidable hence improving the intellectual approach to qualitative and quality Medical care.

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