Barriers to and priorities for research engagement in health librarianship: Outcomes of a PhD

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Flow of evidence into practice

Generation of evidence

To support own practice (conducting research using rigorous designs and methodologies) (EBL)

To support others (involvement with healthcare related research, eg. CRD, Cochrane systematic reviews)

Use of evidence (consumer application)

Applying evidence to own practice (EBL)

Applying evidence in healthcare (CL)
Background

• Calls in literature for an increase in the practice of evidence-based librarianship

• Some small pockets of good practice but generally there is a noted lack of rigour in much of the existing evidence base

• Why is the evidence base in health librarianship so slow to populate?

• To date, there have been no studies that examine issues of research engagement exclusively within the context of health librarianship
Study Aims

• This research set out to answer the question:
  • What are the barriers to and priorities for research engagement in health librarianship?

• Study design: Literature review, focus group, survey

• A focus group aimed:
  • to gain consensus on aspects associated with research in health librarianship and inform development of the survey.

• A national survey aimed:
  • To gain a national picture of research engagement in health librarianship and clarify the barriers to and priorities for research development as perceived by health librarians
Approach to sampling

Eight categories of health librarian identified for purposes of the study

- Academic health librarians
- Clinical librarians
- Health library services librarians
- Health library service managers
- Independent health librarians
- Strategic library managers
- Research librarians
- Academics
Focus Group: 5 key barriers to research engagement in HL

5 Key Barriers to Research

- Existing fragmentation of service provision in health librarianship
- Recognition of the value and role of research in health librarianship
- Time allocation for research in health librarianship
- Funding for research in health librarianship
- Lack of fit between initial training (first degree) and modern research delivery
Focus Group: 5 key priorities for research engagement in HL

- Improve the evidence base in health librarianship
- Identify research topics and prioritise a research programme in health librarianship
- 5 Key Priorities for Research
- Research related CPD for health librarians
- Research related mapping work in health librarianship
- Research related leadership in health librarianship
National Survey

- Survey questions were shaped on the results of the literature review and focus group outcomes

- Pilot tested on the original focus group members

- We asked about:
  - Research qualifications
  - Research training
  - Extent of research interest
  - Research experience
  - Organisational support for research
  - Perceptions of barriers to research
  - Perceptions of priorities for research
Survey Results

• 316 usable responses
Survey Results

• Highest frequency of attendance at research skills training courses was that of critical appraisal skills (n=238, 94.4%)

• Membership of a research related network or professional group was indicated by 26.6% (n=84)

• The highest frequencies of research network membership were with HEALER, HLG, LIRG, Cochrane Collaboration groups, and local trust based journal clubs.
Are you a member of any research related networks or professional groups? (eg. regional or national special interest research groups, journal clubs, etc)

- Yes: 26.6% (84)
- No: 73.4% (232)

[Pie chart showing the distribution of responses]
To what extent have you been involved in research relating to health librarianship?

- 55.4% (175) have secured funding for research (individually or as part of a team).
- 27.2% (86) have conducted my own research.
- 21.5% (68) have been part of a research team.
- 10.8% (34) have never been involved in research relating to health librarianship.
Survey Results

Data queried for the following example questions:

• Is there a relationship between research experience and research training?

• Does research experience differ in terms of qualification types?

• Does research experience or research training relate to perceptions of research importance?

• No relationships found using non-parametric analysis
Survey Results

• However:

• Most health librarians place high value on research development within their role

• Most health librarians place high value on the development of evidence-based practice

• Most see it as an important aspect of their role regardless of research related qualifications or experience
Theme 1: Professional Cultural

- Internal Perspectives/LIS practitioners (positive)
- Internal Perspectives/LIS practitioners (negative)
- External Perspectives/Organisational Support (negative)
Theme 2: Limited Resources

- Funding
- Time
- Literature Sources
- Staffing
- Research Skills Support
- Research Skills
Theme 3: Limited Research related Opportunities

Collaborative Opportunities

Opportunities to do Research
Theme 4: Existing and Future Research

Research Questions

Relevance of Research
Surprise Finding

• Health librarians have a very diverse understanding of the term ‘research’

• Respondents referred to the term in a number of different contexts which had not been anticipated

• Respondents associated research with a considerable number of organisations that did not have any obvious connections to research from the viewpoint of the survey

• Reveals a cultural element of health librarianship worthy of further future investigation
Definitions of Research

• A new definition of research for health librarians:

“An inquiry seeking to establish new knowledge, evidence, facts or concepts through the systematic, rigorous and critical application of rigorous methodological processes of investigation on topic areas specific to the practice and discipline of health librarianship. This definition includes justification of the methodological approach applied, relevant ethical consideration, application of appropriate data collection and analysis, conclusion and dissemination of the findings to appropriate audiences, and which ultimately supports and underpins the practice and development of health librarianship”.

Hannah Spring
Recommendations

• Come to workshop A to find out more!
  • We are keen to hear your opinion and to have some discussion