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# **ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING THE LIBRARY NEEDS OF PHYSICIANS IN SELECTED HOSPITALS IN LAGOS**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A needs assessment survey was conducted to document the library needs of physicians Healthcare Providers. Questionnaires were distributed to physicians in thirty (30) hospitals in Lagos and data are presented in percentages. Study results along with recommended implications detailing necessary actions needed to enhance strengths and address weaknesses identified in the survey are presented. Opportunity for further investigation of library needs is also reported.*

*Healthcare Physicians especially those in Private Hospital without Hospital Libraries need library interventions and support.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the society has been profoundly affected by the development of technologies. This has among others led to tremendous medical advances, which have continued, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Provision of quality Healthcare rests with fewer and fewer large Healthcare Management Networks, which in Nigeria are represented by the Government, owned Teaching Hospitals. However, these large Healthcare Management Institutions are increasingly focusing on cost containment issues, sometimes at the expense of quality care. These large Teaching Hospitals need to integrate vast amounts of data across a broad continuum of care and among different Providers including the private Healthcare Providers. This has made the management of Health information a powerful tool in providing care and containing cost. The importance of knowledge-based information in providing quality patient care is increasingly being recognised worldwide, though more studies need to be done to demonstrate the relationship between access to reliable and timely Healthcare information and patient outcome.

How should this affect the Professional roles of the Health Sciences Librarians, especially in the new millennium? The answer to this question can be summarised in the view of Matteson (1995) who posited that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the library should be acknowledged source of knowledge among others dedicated to information and knowledge.

Lucier (1990) supporting this view added that the librarians should include transfer of information and creation of network digital information access and dissemination with the library integrating more fully with scholarly communication process which will result in a new role for the librarians called Management Knowledge.

Other scholars like Ropen et al (1993) asserted that the librarians must also develop services tailored to meeting specific needs of clients even if it involved research, analysis and interpretation. Here the emphasis is that the Health Librarians must be able to convert information into knowledge for the clients they serve to make some sense out of the endless stream of data rolling along the information highway.

Thus, Medical Librarianship in Africa when compared to those of the developed World in the word of Obaka (1991) "Is at a rudimentary stage due to multitude of problems that besieges it in areas of electronic information transfer, training of Medical Library personnel, economic austerity among others, the health Sciences Libraries in Nigeria have more urgent need than before to become entrepreneurs abandoning 'safe' approaches for innovative solutions by tapping resources which hitherto have remained unexplored.

The above realisation is re-enforced by the campaign of the Nigerian Library Association since the early 1990's that tertiary institutions' libraries which are usually the best equipped Libraries in Nigeria should broaden their horizon to positively affect their immediate and surrounding environment. This study is undertaken to understand the library needs of medical doctor better with view to promoting and motivating library profession so that it moves from it's traditional services in and outside the library organization and is aggressively developed and disseminated. This trend is recommended by some Nigerian librarians (Anafulu 1997) as a way of finding solution to scarcity of funds needed for effective running of Academic Libraries in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **METHODOLOGY**

With the aim of reaching and serving larger percentage of physicians, thirty Privately owned Hospitals were selected and needs assessment survey was distributed to sample Physician employees of these hospitals in all the departments and clinics. Non-probability sampling was used to obtain as large sample as possible.

The privately owned hospitals, many of which did not have departments and units were given between three to five questionnaires depending on their staff strength. The survey questions used by Crabtree and Crawford's (1997) needs assessment tool for evaluating the library needs of healthcare personnel was modified to create assortment of survey questions which are used to access the needs of the physicians.

The questionnaires were administered with the aid of two research assistants within the period of two months.

## **RESULTS**

A total of 150 survey questions were distributed and 119 of them were returned giving overall response rate of 79%. Of the 119 surveys returned, 3 were from those



who had not used the library since they left college. This resulted in 116 (77%) usable data.

The survey instrument asked respondents to identify their departments or clinic name. Most of those in the government owned Hospitals did. While 91 persons from the privately owned Hospitals indicated their Hospital names. The Librarian hoped to target feed back as needed to specific departments and hospital. The first major survey question requested respondents to identify the frequency of their use of the Medical Library during the previous three years, was used because during this period there were concerted effort by the Nigerian Library Association to remain very relevant to it's polity as well as affect it positively.

**TABLE 1:**

Frequency of Library used by physician by Healthcare Provider during the past 3 years.

Frequency of Library Use	No of respondents	Percentage
a-almost-every week = (156times)	23	20] combined 86%
b-almost every month = (36 times)	24	21]
c-more than 12 times	29	25
d-5-12 times	19	16
e-1-4 times	5	4
f-Never	2	2 combined 14%
g-Not aware that the Medical	6	5
Library is available for my use No reply	8	7
Total from usable surveys	108	100%

**TABLE 2            USE OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND MATERIALS**

<b>Library services</b>	<b>Total Number of Users Responses per service N=116</b>	<b>Percentage of Physician Health care Provider using Library Service</b>
Literature searches (Manual and Computerized)	45	39
Answering of reference Questions	37	32
Photocopy of requested information	78	67
Computer training or Library tour/ Orientation	8	7
Inter Library Loans services	5	4
Others (Study for examinations)	2	2
E-mail of requested information	0	0
<b>Library Materials</b>	<b>Total number of Users respon- ses per type of Library materials n=116</b>	<b>Percentages of Health Personnel Using Materials</b>
Journals	81	70
Books	70	60
C.D. Rom Searchware (e.g.medline)	26	22
Video/Audio tapes	20	17
Simulation Models	15	13
Printed Journal Indexes (e.g. Index Medicus1	3	11
Brochures, Pamphlet booklets etc.	7	6
Micro Fiche	3	3
Others (slides)	3	3

The survey also requested users to identify the library services and materials they had used during the period under the study. As shown on table 2, photocopy

services was the most popular with 78 respondents. Manual and computerized Literature searches were also frequently used. This has a response rate of 39%. The lesser-used services included computer training services (7%) and inter library loans services (4%). The use of Email request for information was not sought for at all.

The materials consulted most frequently were journals (70%), Books (60%), CD.Rom Searchwares (22%) and Video and Audio tapes (17%). The details of the remainder of the finding regarding the Health Professionals utilization of Library services and materials are on table 2.

The subsequent needs assessment survey question asked the respondents to rate the library staff as well as the accuracy, timeliness and value of library services and materials received in terms of satisfying their needs the past three years. The library users were asked to use a rating scale of 1-5, with 1 equaling "Very satisfied" 3 equaling "Moderately satisfied" and 5 equaling "Very dissatisfied". The results as shown in table 3 revealed that the majority indicated high satisfaction. In rating their satisfaction with the Library staff 82% of the respondents gave 1 or 2 rating. On the issue of whether users received the Library services or materials requested, 445 of the respondents gave a 1-2 rating. In rating the timeliness of the materials received, 47% of the subjects gave a 1-2 rating. Lastly, 36 percent of those questioned were only moderately satisfied with the quality of materials received.

The surveyed group was asked to identify "Motivators" most frequently causing them to use the Medical Library, the Health Physicians were permitted to choose more than one motivator. Motivating factors causing most health professionals to use the libraries included preparation for patient care/decision making (82 respondents), self-instruction (73 respondents) and job-related issues (48 respondents).

**Table 3: RATING OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL, SERVICES AND RESOURCES**

Rating scale Used by respondents

<i>Very Satisfied</i>		<i>Moderately Satisfied</i>		<i>Very dissatisfied</i>			
1	2	3	4	5			
Categories evaluated					No. of Respondents Selecting	Percentage per rating	Sum of top two ratings 1-2
<b>A How satisfied have you been In contact with Library Personnel?</b>							
Rating		1			68	62)	82%
"		2			21	19)	
"		3			11	9	
"		4			7	6	
"		5			2	2	
Total of Responses					109	100.00	
<b>B When requests were made did you receive the Library Services or materials you requested?</b>							
Rating		1			26	29)	44%
"		2			13	15)	
"		3			45	50	
"		4			8	6	
"		5			0	0	
Total number Responses					89	112	100.00
<b>C Have you received your materials in a time fashion?</b>							
Rating		1			37	37)	82%
"		2			10	10)	
"		3			40	39	
"		4			12	12	
"		5			2	2	
Total number of Responses					101	10	
<b>D How satisfied were you with the quality of materials received?</b>							
Rating		1			21	22)	82%
"		2			14	14)	
"		3			42	44	
"		4			18	19	
"		5			0	0	
Total number of Responses					95	100	



**Table 4: "MOTIVATORS"**

<b>"Motivators"</b>	<b>No. of responses per Ranking Motivator N =16</b>	
Patient care/decision making	82	1
Self instruction	73	2
Job related issues	48	3
Administrative Management problems	37	4
Providing patient education	31	5
Prepare talk/paper/proposals	29	6
School course/assignment	81	7
Job related issues	0	8
Teaching	0	
Othrs (Please specify)		

More details on the motivators can be found on table 4. The rest of the questions were open ended. The aim was to gather as much information as the respondents were willing to provide. The answers of the last three survey questions have been summarized and grouped according to types of responses to simplify reporting. Where respondents gave more than one answer to an open-ended question. All their responses were included. As such, the percentages that follow do not add up to 100%.

The focus group were asked to indicate the libraries they used within the time span. The libraries listed were the Medical Library, College of Medicine, University of Lagos (32%), Nigerian Medical Institution for Research (NMI) Library (20), the Central Medical Library, Yaba (15%), the hospital library at General Hospital, Lagos (20%) and the British Council Library, Victoria Island, Lagos(3%).

Responding to the question about what the Medical doctors liked most about the Libraries they visited, most liked the conducive atmosphere for reading, availability of current journals, efficient library personnel and the fact that they could study through viewing Audio-Visual facilities. Discussing the issue of what they liked least, the library users reported that they did not always find the books they had used before. Some even complained that the cooling systems were not effective, hence, it was difficult for them to study. Other complaints were about the insufficiency of current journals and audio-visual appliances. In summary, the patrons least liked the library with out-dated collections. They desired current journals, improved A-V collections and better cooling systems.



The final open-ended questions requested survey respondents to suggest ways the service and materials offered by the libraries could be improved, the answers to this particular question frequently mirrored the responses given in the previous question regarding the "Least Liked" aspect of the library. However, additional input was received from the final question. The health Professional identified the following ways of improving the library. Twelve percent of the respondents suggested that advertising and writing in-house publication, which they can buy and thus know the newest collections in the library and available services, promote the libraries. Also 46% of those questioned wanted the books and journals collections to be up-dated, while 32 percent of the people surveyed said that high technology information be incorporated into the library by introducing more audio-visual aids and computer applications. Ten percent of the respondents made no comments.

## DISCUSSION

150 of the survey questions were distributed to known library users and those who had not used the Library since they left the Medical College. It was somewhat surprising that 3% of those surveyed claimed that they had never used the library before.

The survey also requested respondents to indicate their Clinic or department name. Most of them filled their hospital names. This seems to suggest that majority of the Private hospitals did not have units or departments. Responses on table one revealed that the majority of the respondents used the Library between, more than 12 times and almost every month (i.e. 156 times) within the three 3 years span. A closer look at the questionnaire revealed that majority of those who visited the library were those from those whose hospitals were nearer to the libraries. It will seem logical to conclude that the doctors in private hospitals would have used the libraries more often if they had hospital libraries.

Examination of table 2 revealed that photocopy services and literature search services were ranked higher than the others. This may be due to the fact that most libraries do not allow non-staff to borrow materials, so most of these physicians from the private sector photocopied whatever they considered relevant and useful to their information needs for further reference without necessarily taking another trip to the library. In a similar manner, the use of journals and books recorded the highest patronage. However, it is interesting, to note that the use of CD-ROM soft-wares are catching on howbeit gradually. Higher patronage of this technology was expected in the leading Medical Libraries in Lagos.

Listed on table 3 are ratings for four different queries regarding library personnel, services and resources. A large majority of clients responded, by indicating that they were satisfied with the libraries' offerings in relation to staff contact, however, the same was not the case with the quality and timeliness of response. This seems to suggest that the library as a matter of urgency needed to renew its drive in purchasing highly sought after materials in multiple copies so that unnecessary delays in access to relevant materials will be minimized. There may also be need to



take financial decisions with a major aim of ensuring high level of satisfaction among physicians.

Table 4, catalogued motivators causing more than 60% of the respondents to use the Libraries as Patient/care decision making and self- instruction. Other motivators included job-related issues and Administrative/Managerial problems. The two open-ended questions covering most used Libraries, most liked and least liked aspects of the library revealed that the Medical Libraries of Colleges of Medicine Idi- Araba and Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NMIR) were mostly used. The most liked aspect of these libraries was availability of recent journals atmosphere conducive for reading and courteous library staff. The least liked aspects included inability to locate needed materials, inefficient cooling system, old journals and books and insufficient A-V materials. These detailed responses from these physicians are at variance with those of Physicians in the USA, which reported to be brief and lacking in directive information.

The last item included comments from respondents. The idea behind this was to receive response to areas not addressed by the survey but which the library users considered important. Some requested higher technology application, to library service by introducing A-V aids and some computer applications, in addition buttressing issues already raised in the least liked aspects of the library services. Many with personal computers wanted networking of Computer systems so as to allow them access to the materials in the library on line. Renewing of Library materials through the telephone was also desired. They wanted the Library hooked unto the internet.

## CONCLUSION

A need assessment survey was given to selected physicians in Lagos state. The survey met four objectives of gathering baseline data, collecting the opinions and recommendations of users and promoting the Library. It also gathered useful data for packaging Health information that could be brokered to physicians especially in private hospitals without libraries.

An overall response rate of 92% physicians provided input on a wide range of information issues. The response confirmed that library services and resources prior to the survey were inadequate, though well suited to meet library and information needs of Health providers. Some of the responses provided insight into the met and unmet library needs of those assessed. In summary, the survey provided extensive directive for libraries to reappraise and redesign the services and resources available to physicians. It has also created awareness for the librarians of the library and information needs of these professionals. In these days of income generation drive, the onus is on the librarians to find out how much these doctors, from the private sectors are prepared to pay for the brokerage of their personalized information.



## **RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION REPORT/SUGGESTIONS**

Post assessment is the final phase of needs assessment process. However, due to logistic and financial reasons collected data were only used to develop plans of action, which are yet to be implemented, so as to address concerns in the Healthcare professionals needs assessment survey.

First, new strategic plans must be formulated to address many of the issues raised by the survey respondents. The plan supports renewed emphasis on provision of more current journals and A-V materials, and books. Library promotion and adjustment of some library operations to ensure easier access to available materials were also recommended.

There is need for the Libraries to set up committees whose duty will be assisting staff in planning, developing, implementing and evaluating library services regularly, directed specifically at Physician Healthcare providers. Those committees will also redesign the delivery of services provided and focus on new and better ways to meet the need of Healthcare Providers. With dwindling resources, collection development policy must be written to reflect increased commitment to the acquisition of materials for every specialty as well as newer departments.

Increasing the visibility of the Medical Library's services and promoting its resources must be addressed urgently with a view to reaching private hospitals who will have access to these services at a token fee with a view to generating some income for at least the maintenance of these services. Operation changes should include both network and remote access to the Medical Libraries Computerized resources. This will include computerized resources like MEDLINE which was available in all the libraries mentioned and some others like Reference Update, Histopathology and many care Medical test books which are presently on the CD ROM.

Finally, there must be renewed commitment to ensuring that the air conditioning units and electricity supply are available at all times during the service hours of the libraries.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Lagos State healthcare professional needs assessments survey.**

Name of your Clinic/Dept. ....

1. Approximately how often have you used the Medical Library's services?  
Or materials in the past three years.

- Almost every week
- Almost every month
- More than 12 times
- 5 – 12
- 1 – 4 times
- Never pls. O to question?
- I was not aware that the Medical Library is available for the use.
- Please go to question?

2. Please check the following library services or materials that you have used in the past three years.

#### **LIBRARY SERVICE**

- Literature search
- Answering of reference questions
- Inter library loans services
- Computer training or library tour/orientation
- E-mailing of requested information
- Others (Specify)

#### **LIBRARY MATERIALS**

- Books
- Journals
- CD Rom search ware (reference update Nephrology Medline etc.)
- Printed journal indexes
- Microfiche
- Video
- Simulation models
- Brochure, pamphlets, booklets, etc.
- Others (please specify)

3. The following questions refer to the library services or materials that you have used within the past three years. Please indicate your answer by circle the appropriate response.

(a) In general, how satisfied have you been with contacts with library personnel?

1                                      2                                      3                                      4

(b) In general, did you receive your material in a timely fashion?

Very satisfied                      moderately satisfied                      very satisfied

1                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5

How satisfied were you with the material you received (i.e. literature searches, photocopies, etc.)

Very satisfied                      moderately satisfied                      very satisfied

1                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5

(c) If you requested library services and or materials.

How would you described the outcome of your request

- Very satisfied                      moderately satisfied                      very satisfied

1                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5

4. Which of the following "Motivators" most frequently cause you to use Medical Library. Check as many as appropriate.

- Patient care/decision making
- Teaching
- Administrative/managerial problems
- School course assignment
- Job related issues
- Providing patient education
- Prepare talk/paper/proposal
- Others (Pease Specify)

5. Which library do you use? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you like most about the Medical Library? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What do you like least about the Medical Library? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Pease make recommendations for ways the Medical Library's Service or materials could be improved to better meet your needs and assist you in your work: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Other comments. \_\_\_\_\_