

LFN RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE: THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH LIBRARY IN RESEARCH-BASED NURSING PRACTICE KAREN BLACKHALL, ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL MEDICAL SCHOOL, MAY 1999

I am an information professional working at St. George's Hospital Medical School where the multidisciplinary library serves a large section of nursing staff who work and study there.

The interest in Evidence based healthcare has grown over the last ten years not least because of input and support from the NHS. Interest in research gives prominence to information and those involved with its delivery. This points to an opportunity for health libraries and information services to establish themselves as a crucial component in the effort to deliver improved health care.

Library and information staff are often the main link between the health professional and sources of evidence based material. They are increasingly expected to become involved in critical appraisal and are regularly involved in teaching library-based IT applications. The aim of the project is to identify the needs of a group of nursing staff who wish to understand and apply research to their clinical practice. The project will potentially give greater power to those involved in providing information to such users and help develop effective methods of support and collaboration.

Professional development plays an important role in nurse education and nurses must be seen to be capable of searching for research as well as being able to disseminate the information and put successful outcomes into practice even when they are new and unfamiliar. In this context, the nurse is presented with new opportunities to be proactive and gain recognition as a major contributor to successful outcomes. How nurses feel about these opportunities and whether there are obstacles impeding their use of research as a basis for effective practice will be an interesting point to consider.

The study will look at a group of nursing staff from a variety of backgrounds who have enrolled on the ENB 870 Understanding Research

Course. The students are all post-registration and are a mixture of levels. The questionnaire sent out to them will address the way they approach a search for information and their attitude to research results as a basis for altering clinical practice and treatment methods.

Valuable insights into information needs and usage of a distinct group may reveal strengths and weaknesses in library service provision. An important outcome will be the opportunity for the library to actively take part in the move towards more effective healthcare by providing information and helping to develop skills needed by those involved.

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