

INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR AMONGST ACADEMICS IN THE HEALTH RELATED FACULTIES, OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

Sriyani Perera

*Medical Library, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
sriper@pdn.ac.lk*

The breadth and complexity of information and knowledge required in medical education, health/medical research and clinical practice is rapidly increasing. Therefore, health information professionals especially in universities have to redesign their services in order to meet this demand. The objectives of the study were to investigate the information seeking behavior of academics in the health related faculties of the University of Peradeniya (UOP), examine how they manage their information needs and make recommendations for appropriate changes for future use.

An online survey questionnaire was administered to all the academics (n=173) of the faculties, of Allied Health Sciences (FAHS), Dental Sciences (FDS), Medicine (FM) and Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science (FVMAS).

The response rate was 34%. The respondents were 17% professors, 59% senior lecturers and 24% lecturers. Their sources of information were, library 24%, Internet 100%, databases through library web page 59%, personal collections of resources 76% and other methods 22%. The majority (90%) sought information for teaching, research, updating knowledge and writing articles while that for managing patients and clinical information varied according to the designation and faculty of the respondents. Lecturers in general and academics from the FAHS who gathered information for writing articles were less in number. Seventy one percent of lecturers used information for preparation of exams. The majority (81%) used E-journals and Web-based information frequently. 'Google search' was stated as the most useful search engine by 98% in all groups. The HINARI database was used by 64% and Medline-PUBMED resource by 71%. Zoo's Print was used by 25% from the FVMAS. Use of Web of Science and Scopus was relatively low. Among the Web resources, medical gateways/portals, interactive learning packages and medical images were used. The library was used for reference (51%), borrowing books (58%) and consulting journals (29%). The Sri Lanka collection and WHO collection were used by a smaller percentage. Over 90% used the Internet, public/guest lectures, conferences/seminars, research sessions, and contacts with professional colleagues for updating, knowledge, while 70% downloaded articles through colleagues abroad. Suggestions for improvement by the respondents were, acquiring online access to reputed core journals, replacing old computers in the E-library with new computers and faster processors and provision of assistance from the library for database searching.

Early studies showed reliance on printed material for information gathering. More recent studies showed that academic teaching physicians accessed online resources, indicating a shift from library oriented to Internet-based information searching. The present study also confirms this shift in the UOP. It is recommended that access to Internet-based resources should be enhanced by providing up to date facilities.