Friday, September 20, Room C, 11.00

The Role of Workplace Access to the Internet in Supporting Evidence-Based Practice: Results of the IMPACT Study

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Aims: "IMPACT" aimed to evaluate how open access to the Internet in the ward area impacts upon the evidence-based practice of nurses and allied health professionals (AHPs) in an acute health care setting.
Background: This UK study was funded by the Department of Health to derive evidence to support current Information Technology (IT) and clinical health policy targets.
Rationale: Expectations of clinicians regarding evidence-based practice are great. IT can facilitate accessing research related to clinical practice. Nurses and AHPs have concerns regarding IT confidence and skills.
Intervention: Dedicated computers on four wards, networked to the Internet via the University.
Sample and setting: Nurses and AHPs working in a large UK teaching hospital with a well-equipped health sciences library.
Design and instruments: A before and after trial employing qualitative and quantitative methodologies. A survey of over 200 staff collected information on research and Internet awareness and use, literature searching and appraisal skills. Semi-structured interviews mapped changes in attitudes to the Internet over the study period. The survey and interviews were conducted at baseline, 3 and 12 months. Monitoring of the study intervention was undertaken.
Results: The multiple data-collection methods have produced a wealth of data on the value of the Internet as a facilitator of evidence-based practice. This paper will focus on participant's expectations and use of the intervention, factors which facilitate and prevent use of the Internet in the clinical area. The added value of access to the Internet on the ward, in addition to the Health Sciences library will be discussed. The role of health library staff in facilitating access to evidence will be considered.
Conclusion: The study reveals the distance to travel before nurses and AHPs in the UK are able to fully participate in the Internet-driven information age.