Saturday, September 21, Room B, 10.00

Development and evaluation of a library skills programme for postgraduates: An example of evidence-based librarianship

Weightman, A; Somers, R; Coles, B
Weightman, Alison: University of Wales College of Medicine, Information Services, Heath Park, Cardiff, CF14 4, UK, WeightmanAL@cf.ac.uk

The University of Wales College of Medicine offers a Diploma in Biomedical Methods to postgraduate students (mostly PhD students) (1). All students take the core course covering information skills, medical statistics, ethical issues, and the presentation of scientific research.

The information skills module includes:
1. An overview of the research literature,
2. Converting information queries into answerable questions,
3. Searching for the best evidence using databases, the Internet and other sources of information,
4. Reference management software, and
5. Critical appraisal.

As is inevitable with a group of postgraduates from a range of backgrounds, the levels of library and information skill within the group vary greatly. For example, 12.5% of the 2001/2002 group considered their database searching skills to be non-existent (or almost so) while 30% felt that they were proficient searchers. 15% had experience of critical appraisal and 17.5% of using reference management software, but over 80% had no relevant experience.

In response, we are developing a self-paced workbook approach (plus extensive tutor support) to ensure that students progress to the required level, at a speed appropriate to their existing skills and experience. To guide these developments, a detailed evaluation of the current course content using pre- and post-course questionnaires plus focus group studies, was carried out. The findings and the challenges raised by this study include:

Small group size important with tailored hands-on teaching following skills assessment test. Some, but less, chalk and talk.

Critical appraisal and reference management software training is welcomed.

The popularity of PubMed indures despite the multi-database searching facility available at the College!

All findings and changes planned for next year's course will be described. This study is a pilot for the development of an evaluative approach to all learning and teaching programmes offered by Library Services.

http://www.uwcm.ac.uk/study/medicine/teaching_and_learning.htm