

Impacting a local mental health service as a clinical librarian

Author:

Keren Lilley, North Lee Mental Health Service, Co. Cork, Ireland

Introduction

As the North Lee Mental Health Service, in Cork (Republic of Ireland), had no professional library provision I was asked to devise a tailor-made service that would nurture a desire for evidence-based practice among the multi-disciplinary teams. Dual trained, as a librarian and as a Registered Mental Health Nurse, I was well placed to understand clinician's needs.

Impacting multi-disciplinary teams To establish a thoroughly multi-disciplinary service, the library needed to prove its worth to the consultants, nurses, managers, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers. By identifying potential "champions" of the service within each discipline and pro-actively disseminating research to them in their areas of interest, they then influenced their colleagues to actively use the library and develop a more evidence-based practice. This strategy paid off after a year as the usage statistics showed staff from each of the disciplines were accessing the service every month.

Impacting the community bases

The next challenge was to draw in the staff on the ten community sites, scattered across Cork city and county. My initial strategy was to send out a library bulletin, but this strategy only engaged those who were already looking for support in evidence-based practice, it failed to fire the imagination of staff who were shy of approaching libraries and IT. Once again, face-to-face contact was the key to stirring up a user-base, through a rotating schedule of site visits. As information requests come in by phones or e-mail (whether from work or from home), the required information is then faxed, e-mailed, posted or delivered by hand, as suits the location. Each satisfied request improves confidence in the service, and demand is building proportionately.

Impacting the forensic team

As the Psychiatric Intensive-Care Unit (PICU) began to develop a forensic outreach team, there was a further challenge for the library service, to widen our subject coverage and to explore wider knowledge networks. By splitting myself and the library facilities between two sites, the job of clinical librarian became fully mobile, thanks to cell phones and web-based e-mail.

Conclusion

Technological developments make a sector-wide mobile service possible, but it takes proactive personal interaction to build service demand and work together towards fully evidence-based practice.