Deepening our understanding of information behaviour in health librarianship: information literacy skills in praxis

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Although there is a reasonable body of research reports on information behaviour in healthcare contexts (e.g. doctors, nurses, oncologists and patients affected by a variety of diseases), there is always the need to learn more and to deepen our understanding. Information literacy needs to build on amongst other things an understanding of information behaviour and the teaching of information literacy (e.g. the didactics, pedagogics and andragogics – the latter concerns adult learning). Research on information behaviour can build on various disciplines, theories and models e.g. Patient Education, Healthcare Communication, Cancer Communication, Information Behaviour, Information Retrieval, Library Science and Information Science. Although much can be learned from research reports on information needs and information behaviour in healthcare contexts, it is also important to demarcate a wider area that can enrich research in the field. Following a typical model of information literacy e.g. the Big6, this paper will explore how the field(s), theories, etc can be identified that can infuse research on information behaviour in healthcare contexts. The paper will start by identifying the gap between what is known (i.e. theories, disciplines mentioned in the existing literature), and then moving on to how relevant literature can be identified e.g. sources that might be searched, contacting people, etc. Another step would be to analyse research reports, theories, etc. in terms of what might be useful for research efforts. The role of information monitoring would also be explored in stimulating new ways of looking at the subject field. The paper will be concluded with a table suggesting new fields, methods, theories, etc. to consider in research that might deepen understanding of information behaviour and support programs in information literacy in healthcare contexts.