

The Menu – Not to Eat But Good to Digest. - How to Improve Hospital Staff Information Literacy

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Abstract: The Medical library at the Karolinska University Hospital wanted to find a new way to reach the hospital staff to improve their information literacy. The library created a “Menu” with several “dishes” – different topics with a specified length of time, ranging from 15 minutes to 45. The wards and clinics could choose the topics of their interest and invite us to their clinic meetings and other staff-meetings. We also saw this Menu as a good way to market our library resources as well as our own professional skills.

Background: The Karolinska University Hospital has of staff of 15 000 of which 2500 are physicians, 6400 nurses and biomedical technicians, 2100 researchers and 250 professors. Each year 4200 students have their clinical training at the hospital. The hospital is organized in 7 divisions with many departments each.

The Medical library has a staff of 5 librarians, 1 technician and 1 part-time assistant. Thanks to our cooperation with other hospital libraries in Stockholm County Council and our cooperation between all the county councils in Sweden can we offer a rich collection of medical journals, e-books and databases to the hospital clinical staff and researchers.

The task of reaching all of the hospital staff is momentous but impossible. During the years we have tried different marketing approaches of our resources in order to improve the hospital staff information literacy. Once we contacted every department at one of our divisions. We tried to find persons who were responsible for the department’s research, for the physicians meeting etc. We e-mailed them, telling them we wanted to come to them and tell them about the libraries resources, accessible from our home-page. We got a small response and contacted them again scheduling a date for us to come.

It was very time-consuming to try to find the right person to contact and then wait for their answer. We gave up after only one division. We were in desperate need of a new approach.

Objective: We teach hospital staff to search Medical information through various databases and online resources, on a regular basis. However, we felt we couldn't reach everyone and we also felt hospital staff have little knowledge of librarians being a BRIDGE, between new research and its implementation of new treatments for the patients. We knew the hospital staff could find evidence for their daily clinical work or materials for their own research through our resources. Better knowledge of how to find new information saves time and leads to higher quality of information retrieved, which in turn leads to better patient’s care.

The Menu is also a good marketing tool.

Methods: Previously we tried to use “News from the library” etc, but that was not a very catchy subject. Then one of the librarians came up with the idea of giving them different topics to choose from, with different lengths of time. Just like in a restaurant – the customer can in piece and quiet decide which dish looks tasty and inviting and what time is best to consume it. Because some of the presentations are only 15 minutes long, it’s easy to combine them and get “three small dishes” at the same time. Perhaps then, they would say “Can I learn that from the library perhaps I can find other things I didn’t know about.”

The Menu consists of short and long presentations. In 2009 we had 13 “dishes” or topics, on the Menu (see appendix 1). To name some:”Keep updated!” (45 minutes),”Images- where to find and how to use”(15 minutes), "Find useful search terms and search in PubMed - an introduction" (30 minutes).

How did we choose the subjects? We got them from questions from our customers – “Where can I find pictures I am allowed to use in presentations?” So we started to update our own knowledge on a variety of web-sites, learn about copyright laws, before adding the topic to our Menu.

Other times we highlight resources we know are not widely known, but very useful, for example electronic books. So we made a “dish” on how to find and use the e-books.

In 2005-2006 there was a big project at Karolinska University Hospital on teaching the EBM process to all physicians at the hospital. The library was a partner in the project. We made a special web-page with the EBM-steps in collaboration with Professor Jörgen Nordenström¹, one of the initiators of the project. The steps are now available at both our internal and external web-page².

As we know there are new physicians and also other occupational groups interested in EBM. Therefore we have a short introduction as one “dish” on our Menu.

We also have “dishes” that are tailored for different occupational groups “For you who are nurses ...” “For you who are physiotherapists...” In these presentations we use our intranet page with our Target Groups icons, where we have selected the most important resources for that profession. We don’t want them to drown in the multitude of online resources on our homepage.

Each semester we send our printed Menus to all clinics and departments of the hospital. The “Menu” is also available on the Library’s pages on the intranet. We have sent an e-mail to all directors of studies for resident physicians as well.

Now the clinic or department contacts us, asking us if we can come to a specific meeting. We don’t need to find the right persons to contact. This saves us a lot of time and frustration.

When a clinic contacts us we always ask them what they want us to focus on. We also ask them to give us examples of terms and topics or situations meaningful to them; we can use in our presentation.

On some occasions we have discovered that their and our approaches differ in terms of the content of our dishes. Sometime they want to mix 2-3 topics into one. On one occasion a clinic with many researchers wanted to book “Get started with EndNote”, but they were already familiar with EndNote, wanted us to tell them about advanced functions in the program instead.

At the end of each semester, we will analyse the “Menu”, remove a topic with little or no demand. At the first semesters when we had “Keep updated”, we tried to put too much into the presentation and had not only how to save searches or to subscribe to ToC, but also about RSS and pod casts. We soon discovered that the majority only wanted to know how to save searches and subscribe to ToC, so we excluded RSS and pod casts in later Menus.

We add a new topic on proposal from the medical or the library staff.

During 2010 we will try to lift a specific “dish” e.g. “Find useful information for your patients” which has been on the menu for a couple of semesters. Our strategy is to contact nurses, who are responsible at the different departments teaching others about patient information. In Sweden the physicians and nurses supply their patients with all information they require, to be able to make informed decisions about their own care. We know that staff has lack of time to learn where to find complementary information helping their patients. In Sweden we have two collaborations between hospitals libraries. One is called PION – “Patient Information Online” where, for example addresses to patient organizations can be found³. The other is called Vårdverktyget (The “Care tool”), where you can find patient information in many different languages⁴.

Not only has the hospital staffs increased their information competence. We librarians also increased our competence working with the different “dishes”. We librarians have different specialities, but most “dishes” can be presented by us all. We have never had problems allocating them, due to lack of time or competence.

Results The most requested dishes were "Keep updated" and "Find the right search terms/" "Introduction to PubMed". Starting year 2008, we had 15 mini-seminars (dishes) and 2009 we had 52. Amongst professionals who invited us to their meetings, were for example physicians, nurses, physiotherapists and different research groups.

We don't know why the dish “for a specific target group” was not requested 2009.

The most requested “Dishes”	2008	2009
Keep updated	5	9
Find useful search terms and search in PubMed - an introduction	1	12
Nurses doctors ...	3	0
Search evidenced based	2	6
Make friends with e-books	1	7

Conclusions: This method has proved very useful for improving the hospital staff information literacy.

We offer different kind of topics that our users probably don't know they can request.

We visit the hospital staff at their workplace or clinic, and therefore save their time.

They appreciate they can choose topic and decide the length of time for each presentation. We estimate the best results are achieved, when the clinic choose their own topics, relevant to their own fields of interest.

It worked out to be an excellent method in reaching more staff and marketing our online resources. We have also noticed we get more requests at large, from clinics and department on other customized presentations, not only the ones found on our Menu.

The Menu also proved to be an excellent way to market our competence.

References:

1. Jörgen Nordenström Evidence based medicine in Sherlock Holmes Footsteps, Malden, Mass. Balckwell Publishing, 2007
2. www.karolinska.se/ebm
3. www.pion.se
4. www.vardverktyget.se, see Kliniskt arbete/Patientinformation