

Gaining and keeping a higher profile – Developing a new 'corporate' Clinical Librarian role

Louise Hull

Glenfield Hospital, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicester, UK

Introduction

It has become increasingly evident that Health Librarians need to support non-clinical staff in hospitals in an appropriate and useful manner, helping to achieve “mission-critical” goals within the organisation¹. Evidence-based practice is equally important in corporate areas; however health managers' use of library services in our NHS Trust has been lower than their clinical counterparts.

Aim

Our NHS Trust has a strong history of providing a Clinical Librarian service for specific clinical areas, gaining an international reputation as a centre of excellence in this field. In order to stay at the cutting edge of Clinical Librarianship it is important to innovate and consider new ways of working, ensuring that the library's profile is raised across new areas.

The aim of this project was to carry out a pilot and roll out of a new Clinical Librarian role, focusing on both corporate and Trust-wide services which include Strategy, Clinical Risk, Quality and Infection Control. This would increase evidence-based (or experience-based) practice in non-clinical areas, using a 'top-down' approach as opposed to the traditional 'bottom up' approach which is implemented within Clinical Teams.

Methods

A new Clinical Librarian role job description was developed and tailored to meet the needs of corporate and Trust-wide areas. The pilot phase was carried out between November 2008 and April 2009 whereby the new role was created and work began to develop a Clinical Librarian type service in a number of non-traditional areas. Meetings were arranged with key individuals to market the new role in corporate teams, at Director level where possible.

Current awareness bulletins were produced after consultation with specific service areas in Infection Control, Strategy and Nursing. Potential recipients were also selected and the bulletins were emailed out, with a note to suggest forwarding to other contacts that may be interested and also requesting any feedback to ensure the document was useful and met the needs of its users. These were developed by horizon scanning a number of different resources and via the Daily Health Bulletin email sent by NHS Sheffield².

Summaries of UK guidelines and other important publications for all of the clinical directorates were also produced in order to supplement the business planning process. These were disseminated out to corporate and clinical management for consideration.

Results

The new role has been successful in increasing evidence-based practice in corporate and Trust-wide departments. Senior managers in the organisations are becoming aware of the capabilities and value of the service offered to them.

The current awareness service has proved very useful and comments received include:

“Thank you very much for this. It is incredibly helpful, as this means I do not have to do my usual trawl to find out what the latest news is!”

Director of Nursing

“Just like to say thank you very much for the link you send to us. There is so much useful information which I know I would never have the time to find myself.”

Infection Control Nurse

“This is absolutely brilliant! Sadly I don’t have the time to undertake literature searches, however, this approach will really help me and my team in keeping up to date with the latest published research/articles, many thanks, I shall look forward to future circulations.”

Head of Nursing (Medicine & A&E)

Library membership for Managers has increased from 48 to 64 over the last two years, along with Athens usage in this group, suggesting that usage and knowledge of library services has increased in this customer group. The number of non-clinical literature searches received has increased substantially as more corporate areas become aware of the new service available to them.

Discussion

The 'Corporate' Clinical Librarian has now become embedded in trust-wide services such as Strategy, Infection Control, Audit and guideline development. A flexible way of working has been developed and the Clinical Librarian has needed to adapt and up-skill to meet the differing needs of corporate teams. This has involved the need to become more familiar with alternative resources that are needed to meet the corporate information needs.

The benefits of this role are very similar to that of the traditional Clinical Librarian role. Saving busy professionals time (and thus the organisation money) is just one of a number of advantages. Providing appropriate evidence and information to influence decision making at a corporate and strategic level helps to ensure that services are based on good practice rather than anecdotal information.

The new role has resulted in a higher profile for the library among key, influential Director-level individuals in the organisation, ensuring the benefits of the library service are known across the Trust. The role has also enabled the library to become involved in the Map of Medicine project, in terms of localising care pathways to reflect both local and best practice.

While the new role has been a success in many ways, there have been some challenges along the way. These include educating managers about evidence-based information resources and the benefits, as well as gaining the trust of managers to be able to attend various meetings where they maybe discussing confidential subject matter.

Conclusions

The role has proved successful and has highlighted the potential for other hospitals to provide similar services. Further corporate areas where the role could provide support are being explored including Human Resources and Corporate Communications. Web 2.0 tools are being considered for current awareness summaries, so that details about recently published reports and useful publications are available in a timely manner.

Ultimately more work needs to be carried out to try and fully understand the impact of the role.

References

¹ Holst, R. *et al.* 2009. Vital pathways for hospital librarians: present and future roles. *The Journal of the Medical Library Association*. 94(4), 285-292.

² NHS Sheffield Library Service. *Daily Health Bulletin* <http://www.sheffield.nhs.uk/healthbulletin/> [accessed 26.05.10].