

WORKING TOGETHER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH: COOPERATION OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SLOVENIA

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Introduction

The poster describes collaboration between the Central Medical Library (CMK) of the University of Ljubljana and 3 central public libraries in health literacy promotion activities. A pilot project was started with the aim of establishing "Health Corners" in the participating public libraries. Their successful operation depends on fulfilling the users information needs which were identified by a questionnaire. The answers obtained that user friendly access to the quality consumer health information is needed. These needs can be met successfully by a collection of trustful consumer health resources and occasionally help from librarians or health professionals trained in information searching and information delivery.

Health Literacy Promotion

- Health literacy has been defined by WHO as the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health.
- The importance of health literacy is now widely recognised:
 - 7th Global Conference on Health Promotion stressed that health literacy addresses the environmental, political and social factors that determine health.
 - IFLA in 2010 organised the section Health Information for All-New challenges-New solutions
- Health literacy promotion and accessing health information through libraries has many important advantages for both, patients and public.

Health Corners: Pilot Project in Slovenia

"Public libraries for public health"

- In Slovenia a project "Public libraries for public health in 2007" started with a pilot study which was - at the beginning - organized as a Lecture and an open discussion by the Red Cross. 43 health related questions, asked by the audience, were evaluated. The results of this study were presented at the EAHIL workshop, Dublin, 2009: *Tržan-Herman, N. Working on public health information in public libraries.*
- In 2010 the collaboration between public libraries and the CMK was intensified. Possibilities were discussed for the organisation and Establishment of "Health Corners" at public libraries where the combination of information support of librarian and health professionals (volunteers) would be used to provide a high quality service for the users. The vision and plans were summarised in the article: *Tržan-Herman, N & Rožic, A. Public libraries for public health: the continuation of an innovative project in Slovenia, EAHIL Journal, 2010, 6 (1), 8-10*
- In April 2011 there was a meeting at a Public Library Oton Zupančič, Ljubljana (a meeting photo). Librarians from 3 public libraries – Ljubljana, Maribor and Novo mesto and the CMK participated. They approved the plan for the establishment of Health Corners and the programme.

Pilot Project Goals

- Provide training for librarians and health professionals in searching health information and efficiently solving users' needs.
- Building collections of consumers' health resources.
- Start a new information service - Health Corners
- Providing support and regular training by the Central Medical Library

Collaboration in the pilot project:

Central public libraries from three Slovenian regions: Dolenjska (Novo mesto), Central (Ljubljana) and Podravska (Maribor)



Public library users' information needs

- Six librarians (responsible for information delivery) from three central public libraries answered the Questionnaire - created by a template "Access to electronic consumer health information for public", *J Med Libr. Assoc 91(3), July 2003, 357-359*
- Printed version of our questionnaire is enclosed to the poster

Results revealed the following information needs:

- Librarians mostly answer the questions related to specific diseases and complementary therapies.
- Customers prefer to ask questions directly at the library; they do not like to communicate through phone or E-mails.
- Librarians usually solve requests using information contained in printed material owned by library and from Internet. Customers often borrow adequate books in connection with their health problems.
- CMK consumer health resources in Slovenian language haven't been used and need more promotion.
- The results showed that librarians in public libraries do not use PubMed or other foreign databases – except sometimes EBSCO Host.
- Librarians mostly answer the questions on specific diseases and complementary therapies.
- Librarians are not enough familiar with medical terminology. But in spite of this they usually provide answers to questions within 15 minutes. If not they seek advice from colleagues or send customers to special libraries.
- Most frequently asked users questions came from the following topics: disease management, diet and nutrition, healthy lifestyle, pregnancy, first aid, alternative (complementary) medicine.
- Librarians regard as most useful the training on the following topics:
 - Finding health information (e.g. in PubMed) on various subjects, including health prevention, complementary medicine,
 - Finding drug information
 - Medical terminology (English, Slovenian)
 - Using information resources at CMK
 - Finding health information in national-Slovenian-language
 - Patient organizations and self-help groups in Slovenia and abroad
 - The quality of health information resources on the internet
- Recently the following "health related questions" were asked at these public libraries: explanation of medical terms, problems with *Candida albicans* and obesity, complementary medicine therapies.

Public librarians and health professionals training

- CMK organized a training course at which 8 librarians from three central public libraries and 2 pharmacists took part.
- The training programme was prepared in accordance with users' and librarians' needs as detected through the answers to the questionnaire.

Training programme:

- Introduction to medical information
- Patient's rights
- CMK collection printed resources for consumer health
- CMK collection of Internet resources and databases
- Slovene and English resources
- Health information
- Drug information
- Searching skills
- Patient organizations and self-help groups

Conclusions

- Librarians in public libraries come across several health related questions and they wish to improve their knowledge in that area.
- CMK organised the training course customised to the discovered needs and ensured regular information support.
- Quality health information sources in Slovenian and English language need more promotion in public libraries
- Librarians become more aware of their role and possibilities in health literacy promotion at citizens
- Establishment of "Health Corners" in public libraries offers a new and more systematic service to the users.

