INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF HOMEOPATHY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Growth of information is excessive in Medical science like many other sciences, and which is critically dependent on up-to-date information. The rapid proliferation of information in this era has important implications for the education of health professionals including medical students. Information and communication technologies have provided opportunities for medical libraries to meet the needs of their users in a much better way. The present study is undertaken to find out the information needs and seeking behavior of medical students in Athurasramam N.S.S. Medical College, Kurichy. The main goal of the study is to understand and identify the ways adopted by the B.H.M.S students in Athurasramam N.S.S. Homeo Medical College, Kurichy for collecting information and find out whether the existing library facilities are useful for their information needs.

Keywords: Information need, Information seeking behavior, Medical students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information is vital resource and needed by everyone including students and faculties to enhance their academic performance. The users visit libraries in quest for information but when the same users face problems such as absence of proper knowledge regarding type of information resources, purpose of seeking or searching information etc. it affects the use of

library resources. The users feel that library could not fulfill their needs and that they are wasting time in searching for the information as well obtaining need based information. Keeping these considerations in mind the present study has been undertaken to assess the information seeking behavior of medical students to fulfill needs of users from libraries in digital information era and solve their problems. Information seeking and information needs of library users are changing due to many factors and there is a necessity to assess ISB and usage of resources of medical students. The present study is an effort made towards this aspect and reviews the medical student's attitude towards using resources, awareness of resources, methods of seeking information, problems faced, use of free information resources etc.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thukaram, K.¹ focused a study on Information Seeking Behavior of Research scholars at Central University Libraries in Hyderabad. The study was undertaken to determine the information seeking behavior and library use by the researchers in the Central University Libraries. The overall objective of the study was to determine the information requirements of researchers and also to determine their awareness of available library services. The study collected data on the information requirements of research scholars. The study also aims to find out the nature and degree of constraints experienced in the process of information seeking. A pre ordered structured questionnaire was prepared anticipating the information needs, seeking behavior and use pattern of the users of Central University Libraries researchers (Ph.D.). A survey method was used for data collection. Out of 150,110 filled in questionnaires were returned by the users. Findings showed that library is mostly used by the users to visit library to study and preparing research. The 20% of users to visit the library for borrowing materials and using e-resources. The library system of Central University libraries might be capable of handling the collection of information according to the need and demands of the researchers. Findings also indicate the guidance and use of library resources and services is necessary to help researchers meet some of their information requirements.

Bhanu, Parthap² investigated the information needs and seeking behavior of the users of Lala Rajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Hisar (India). The main objective of the present study appraises information use and seeking behavior of faculty members, research scholars and PG students for their reference and use of appraising other to emulate. A sample of 200 users was taken from various categories of users covering faculty members, research scholars and postgraduate students. A questionnaire was designed and distributed among the users to collect the primary data. Statistical tools like percentage analysis are used to analyze the data. The paper discusses various aspects of information needs and seeking information, such as knowledge of information resources, frequency of use, usefulness of library resources, information search preferences, adequacy of library collection and Information Technology IT based information, barriers in seeking information and perception towards helpfulness of library staff and so on. The survey method with the aid of well-designed questionnaire is used to conduct the research. Random sampling has been adopted and the data has been collected with the pre tested questionnaire. The findings revealed that majority of research scholars search their information from e-resources. Cent percent research scholars were using internet facilities and e-resources, whereas PG students were using CD-ROM data bases. While others are satisfied with the performance of library staff. In the end preferably in- charge of readers Service Division, should focus on assisting of this study is to analyze the behavior of users towards their information needs and usage pattern.

3. OBJECTIVES

- To examine the information needs and seeking behavior of medical students in Athurasramam N.S.S. Medical College, Kurichy.
- To know the use and level of satisfaction of information sources and services provided by the library.
- To determine the impact of IT on information seeking of medical students.
- To identify the barriers encountered by the medical students in seeking information.
- To make appropriate suggestions if necessary for the improvement of the systems and services of Athurasramam N.S.S. Homeo Medical College Library.

4. METHODOLOGY

Survey method using questionnaire was adopted to collect data and the investigator interviewed the digital librarian for the same. Observation method also used to gather data for study. The population of the study is the students in Athurasramam N.S.S. Homeo Medical College, Kurichy. The college offers B.H.M.S course. The total number of students during the period of study is 243 and all of them have been included in the study. The investigator distributed 243 questionnaires to the students and 232 were received from them. The percentage of response is 95.47%. The percentages of medical students who do not respond are 4.53%.

5. ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 Information Need

5.1.1. Purpose of Information Seeking

A question was asked to know the purpose of seeking information.

Table I Purpose for Information Seeking

SI NO		No of Respondents and Percentage					
	Purposes	Grade of preference					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Improving clinical decision making	85 (36.64%)	68 (29.31%)	38 (16.38%)	24 (10.34%)	15 (6.47%)	8 (3.45%)
2	Keeping up to date	84 (36.21%)	63 (27.16%)	45 (19.40%)	29 (12.5%)	5 (2.16%)	17 (7.33%)
3	Sharing knowledge with colleagues	20 (8.62%)	35 (15.09%)	61 (26.29%)	48 (20.69%)	33 (14.22%)	39 (16.81%)
4	Answering colleagues/ Patient	31 (13.36%)	40 (17.24%)	46 (19.83%)	57 (24.57%)	46 (19.83%)	18 (7.76%)
5	Writing reports/ Research paper	10 (4.31%)	17 (7.33%)	28 (12.07%)	42 (18.10%)	40 (17.24%)	85 (36.64%)
6	To prepare for Seminars/ Conferences/Workshops	10 (4.31%)	28 (12.07%)	34 (14.66%)	31 (13.36%)	63 (27.16%)	47 (20.26%)

5.1.2. Table 1 reveals that

5.1.3. First Preference

When 36.64% of students seek information for Improving clinical decision making, 36.21% seek it for Keep up to date followed by Answering colleagues/ Patient questions 13.36%, Sharing knowledge with colleagues 8.62% and an equal percentage seek information for both Writing reports/ Research papers and prepare for Seminars/ Conferences/ Workshops 4.31%.

5.1.4. Second Preference

When 29.31% of students seek information for Improving clinical decision making, 27.16% seek information to Keep up to date followed by Answering colleagues/ Patient questions 17.24%, preparation of Seminars/ Conferences/ Workshops 12.07% and to Write reports/ Research papers 7.33%.

5.1.5. Third Preference

26.29% of students seek information for Sharing knowledge with colleagues, 19.83% seek information for Answering colleagues/ Patient questions followed by to Keep up to date 19.40%, Improving clinical decision making 16.38%, for preparation of Seminars/ Conferences/ Workshops 14.66% and to Write reports/ Research papers 12.07%.

5.2 Information Seeking Behavior

5.2.1. Time spend for Information seeking per day

Respondents were asked to indicate the time spend for information seeking activities per day.

Table 2 Time Spend for Information Seeking Per Day

Sl.NO	Time Spend	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	More than three Hours	67	28.88%
2	1-3 Hours	65	28.02%
3	Less than 1 hour	100	43.10%

Table 2 reveals that majority 43.10% of students spend less than 1 hour for the information seeking activities followed by more than 3 hours, 28.88% and 1-3 hours 28.02% per day.

5.2.2. Communication Channels used for Information Seeking

A question was asked to know about the commonly used communication channels for information seeking.

Table 3 Communication Channels

Sl.NO	Communication channels	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Meet personally	128	55.17%
2	Face to face discussion	149	64.22 %
3	E-mails	92	39.66%
4	Telephone	65	28.01%
5	Postal mails	0	0
6	Fax	2	2%

Table 3 indicates that multiple responses were received for this question. Face to face Discussion is the major communication channel used by medical students (64.22%) followed by Personal meeting 55.17%, E-mails 39.66% and Telephone 28.01%. Only 2% of them used Fax as their communication channel.

5.2.3. Preferred Formats

Respondents were asked to specify their preferred format of information sources.

Table 4 Preferred Formats

Sl.NO	Formats	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Print	42	18.10%
2	Electronic	26	11.20%
3	Audio visual	95	40.95%
4	Print & electronic	107	46.12%

Table 4 reveals that most 46.12% of the students prefer both Print and Electronic information sources followed by 40.95% of the students are using Audio visual formats, 18.10% use Printed information whereas 11.20% used electronic information sources.

5.2.4. Use of Consortia/Portals/Databases for Information Seeking

Respondents were asked to identify which are the consortia/ portals/ databases they used for seeking information.

Table 5 Use of Consortia/Portals/Databases

Sl. No.	Consortia/ Portals/Databases	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	PubMed	43	18.53%
2	Homeo book	134	57.75%
3	Whole Health Now	12	5.17%
4	H.O.P.E Online portal	75	32.33%
5	NTR MEDNET Consortia	0	0

Table 5 shows that multiple responses were received for this question. Majority 57.75% of medical students used Homeo book for their information seeking whereas 32.33% of them used H.O.P.E Online portal followed by 18.53% use PubMed and 5.17% use Whole Health Now.

5.2.5. Sources of Extensive Information

The respondents were asked to indicate the sources they depend for finding extensive information relating to their topic.

Table 6 Sources of Extensive Information

Sl.NO	Sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	College library	178	76.72%
2	Other medical libraries	27	11.64%
3	Professional institutions	33	14.22%
4	Homeopathic portals/databases	110	50%
5	Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	100	43.10%

As per Table 6 multiple responses were received for this question. Majority of students 76.72% depends College library for seeking extensive information relating to their subject of interest followed by Homeopathic portals/databases 50%, Seminars or Conferences or Workshops 43.10%, Professional institutions 14.22% and other medical libraries 11.64%.

5.2.6. Tools Used for Locating Information

Respondents were asked to specify the tools used for locating information.

Table 7 Tools Used for Locating Information

Sl.NO	Tools	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Consulting library Staff	85	36.64%
2	Direct search in the Shelf	132	56.90%
3	Searching E-resources	15	6.47%
4	Through OPAC	0	0

Table 7 shows that more than half 56.90% of medical students locate information through direct search in the shelf while 36.64% of them Consult library staff and only 6.47% used various e-resources. None of them are using OPAC for locating information.

5.2.7. Methods Adopted for Seeking Information

Respondents were asked to specify the methods adopted for seeking information relating to their field of interest.

Table 8 Methods Adopted for Seeking Information

Sl.NO	Methods	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Current issues of journals	72	31.03%
2	CAS services	0	0
3	Seminars/Conferences	112	48.28%
4	Through internet	188	81.03%
5	Online/CD ROM databases	51	22%
6	Personal communication with subject experts	45	19.40%

Table 8 shows that multiple responses were received for this question. Majority 81.03% of the students use Internet for seeking information relating to their field of interest followed by Seminars/ Conferences 48.28%, Current issues of journals 31.3%, Online/ CD ROM data bases 22% and Personal communication with subject experts is 19.40%.

5.2.8. Criteria for Selecting Databases or Portals

A question was asked to specify the criteria for selecting various databases/ portals meet their health information needs.

Table 9 Criteria for Selecting Databases or Portals

Sl.NO	Databases/Portals	Accessibility	Accuracy	Ease of Understanding	Reliability
1	PubMed Central	113	38	56	24
		(48.70%)	(16.38%)	(24.14 %)	(10.34%)
2	Materiamedica & Repertory database	0	0	0	0
3	CORE-Hom	0	0	0	0
4	Homeo book	98	35	30	42
		(42.24%)	(15.09%)	(12.93%)	(18.10%)
5	Whole Health Now	29	65	34	13
		(12.5%)	(28.02%)	(14.66%)	(5.60%)
6	H.O.P.E Online	124	22	20	38
	Portal	(53.45%)	(9.48%)	(8.62%)	(16.38%)
7	Science Direct	0	0	0	0

5.2.9. Table 9 reveals that

5.2.10. Accessibility

More than half 53.45% of medical students stated H.O.P.E Online portal is accessible followed by PubMed central 48.70%, Homeo book 42.24% and 12.5% Whole health now.

5.2.11. Accuracy

28.02% of medical students stated Whole health Now is accurate followed by PubMed central 16.38%, Homeo book 15.09% and 9.48% stated H.O.P.E Online.

5.2.12. Ease of Understanding

24.14% of medical students stated PubMed central is easily understandable followed by Whole health Now 14.66%, Homeo book 12.93% and 8.62% stated H.O.P.E Online portal.

5.2.13. Reliability

18.10% of medical students stated Homeobook is reliable followed by H.O.P.E. Online portal 16.38%, PubMed Central 10.34% and 5.60% stated Whole health now.

5.3 Information Technology

5.3.1. Use of Search Engines

Respondents were asked to specify the search engines they used for seeking information.

Table 10 Use of Search Engines

Sl.NO	Search Engines	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Bing	30	12.93%
2	Altavista	15	6.46%
3	Yahoo	15	6.46%
4	Google	231	99.57%

As per Table 10 multiple responses were received for this question. Majority 99.57% of students prefer to search information through Google followed by 12.93% preferred Bing, 6.46% equally preferred both Alta vista and Yahoo.

5.3.2. Purpose of using Internet

Respondents were asked to specify their purpose of using internet in the order of priority.

Table 11 Purpose of using Internet

SI NO	Purpose	Order of Preference				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	For Communication	76	45	42	12	8
		(32.75%)	(19.39%)	(18.10%)	(5.17%)	(3.45%)
2	For Updating Knowledge	167	56	41	38	10
		(71.98%)	(24.14%)	(17.67%)	(16.38%)	(4.31%)
3	For prepare for Classroom Assignment	45	29	36	47	65
		(19.40%)	(12.5%)	(15.52%)	(20.26%)	(28.02%)
4	For Career development	17	28	44	56	84
		(7.33%)	(12.07%)	(18.97%)	(24.14%)	(36.21%)
5	Recreation	1	21	58	61	91
		(0.43%)	(9.05%)	(25%)	(26.29%)	(39.22%)

5.3.3. First Preference

71.98% of students use internet for Updating Knowledge while 32.75% use internet for Communication. 19.40% of them use internet to prepare for Class room assignment while 7.33% use for Career development. Only 0.43% use internet for Recreation.

5.3.4. Second Preference

24.14% of students prefer internet for Updating knowledge while 19.39% use internet for Communication. 12.07% use for Career development and 12.5% use internet for preparing for Classroom assignments. 9.05% of students to use it for Recreation.

5.3.5. Third Preference

25% use internet to for Recreation while 18.97 % use it for Career development. 18.10% use internet for Communication whereas 17.67% use internet for Updating knowledge and 15.52% use it for preparation for Classroom assignments.

5.4 Problems

5.4.1. Problems in Information Seeking

A question was asked to specify the problems they face while seeking medical information.

Table 12 Problems in Information Seeking

Sl NO	Problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Inadequate material Collection	67	28.88%
2	Library staff unwilling for Service	85	36.64%
3	Non availability of sources and services	55	23.71%
4	Inconvenient working hours	45	19.40%
5	Lack of knowledge in using library facilities	76	32.76%
6	Too much information on the internet	98	42.24%
7	Inadequate qualified staff	167	71.98%

Table 12 indicates that multiple responses were received for this question. Majority 71.98% of respondents stated that their main problem while seeking information is Inadequate qualified staff, 42.24% stated Too much information on the internet is the problem followed by Library staff unwilling for service 36.64%, Lack of knowledge in using library facilities 32.76%, Inadequate material collection 28.88% and Non availability of sources and services 23.71%. 19.40% of respondents stated that Inconvenient working hours is their main problem while seeking information.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Analysis revealed that majority of the medical students seek information for improving clinical decision making and keeping them up to date in their field.
- It is evident from the analysis that majority of the medical students spend less than 1 hour per day on information seeking activities.
- Majority of the medical students attested that they prefer face to face communication and personal meetings where as they seldom use postal mails as communication channels.
- Analysis revealed that students like to read in both print and electronic format.
- Majority of the medical students explore Homeobook while searching information and other important consortiums in their field are relatively less used.
- It is evident from the analysis that majority of the medical students depend college library for extensive information relating to their topic.
- Majority of the medical students locate their preferred information through direct search in the shelf. Further analysis revealed that OPAC is not all used to locate information.
- Analysis revealed that majority of medical students adopted Internet for seeking information. Further it is revealed that Seminars/ Conferences are the next used method for seeking information.
- Accessibility is the major criteria for selecting databases/portals in their field whereas accuracy and reliability are the less used.
- Majority of the medical students indicated the need for training to use library resources.

- Majority of the medical students specified that unqualified library staff is their major problem while seeking information. Majority of them pointed out information overload as a problem while using internet.

6.1 Suggestions

- Qualified library staff must be appointed to provide effective and efficient services to the medical students.
- The library staff may be equipped with sufficient ICT knowledge and browsing skills by the means of formal training programmes.
- User Education programmes needed to be conducted to educate the users on Use of Search Engines, Rating the electronic resources, Use of available resources and Use of Library OPAC.
- The Medical Library should be adequately stocked with more current and up-to-date information materials including journals and other serial publications.
- Medical students very seriously require user education programmes, especially the periodical training on computer and communication technology as this would go a long way in equipping them with the requisite skills needed to explore information in the library using modern facilities.
- Library should as a matter of policy ensures that provide assistance to medical students, especially those who may have difficulties in searching for needed information or using the facilities of the library.

7. CONCLUSION

Results of the study shows that even though the medical students use various resources and services, there is low use of quality information resources such as online databases, e-journals etc. The study revealed that the students are not getting proper orientation/ guidance and assistance from the library staff which is very necessary for the effective use of information sources and services. The study also pointed out the non-availability of various sources and services to be provided by a medical college library.

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