AVAILABILITY AND USE OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN MEDICAL LIBRARIES BY PRE CLINICAL STUDENTS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN EDO STATE

BY

SUNDAY A. OGUNTAYO
MEDICAL LIBRARY,
IGBINEDION UNIVERSITY OKADA, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

The main aim of the study was to indentify the availability and use of information resources in medical libraries by pre-clinical students in selected universities in Edo state. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Three hundred and thirty four respondents participated in the study. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Five research questions were formulated for the study. Results were analyzed using simple percentages. Textbooks, dictionaries, journals, are some of the available information resources in the medical libraries studies. Low Computer literacy to browse the Internet was the major problem associated with the use of information resources. The study concludes that creating awareness of information resources is essential for maximum utilization by pre-clinical students.

Keywords: Information availability, Information resources, Information Use, Pre-clinical students

Introduction

Information plays a significant role in our daily professional and personal lives and we are constantly challenged to take charge of the information that we need for work, fun and everyday decisions. The development of information and communication technologies (ICT) has led to an exponential growth and wide availability of information for use in all facets of life. However, in developing countries, there is reduced access to vital information needed for development. The widening of the biomedical science information gap between developed and underdeveloped nations has become a matter of significant concern to scientists in the Third World (Obaka 1991). Adio (2002) stated that there is an increasing pressure on health care professionals to ensure that their practice is based on evidence from quality research. Glanville, (1995) as reported by Urquhart and Hepworth (2005), stated that, "better-informed consumers will provide better initiative for clinicians in their research findings." He added

that, "physicians will need to access information on clinical effectiveness in order to improve the quality of care and to stay well informed on developments in specialty areas. Medical libraries are agencies set up to collect and disseminate health-related information to support medical education and to improve healthcare delivery. These libraries can also function to bridge this gap in information access. Adomi (2008) noted that institution's library will meet the need of their users by providing access to information which is physically located in the library. The information resources that would be provided for school of medical sciences should be those that will serve the college's broad objectives- the curriculum of medicine. The information resources to be provided both in print and electronic resources would be those whose contents address the curriculum. The print media may be in form of books; Encyclopedia; Journals; Charts; Graph etc. and also electronic journals. However, where these information

resources are made available the medical students did not make adequate use of them. According to Oyibo (2008) asserted that "over the years the medical library in Nigeria has made efforts providing MEDLINE both on the Online in addition to other materials that would enhance information. Moreover the use of MEDLINE on CD-ROM is still very poor among the medical students in Nigeria due to lack of awareness, insufficient personal computers, no periodic training of users and high cost of using the facility." Whittaker (1997) and Popoola (2001) however caution that availability of information resources and services does not automatically translate to information accessibility and use.

This research will therefore provide answers to the question: Are medical information resources utilized by medical students in Igbinedion University Okada and university of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekponma?

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate how medical students make use of information resources in the medical libraries. The specific objectives were to:

1. Find out the type of information resources available in the medical libraries in the selected universities in Edo state.

2. To determine whether information resources are accessible to pre-clinical students in the selected universities in Edo state

3. To identify the problems associated with the use of information resources in the medical libraries in selected universities in Edo state.

4. To explore how the problems associated with the use of available information resources in the medical libraries by pre-clinical students can be surmounted in the selected universities in Edo state.

Research questions

1. What are the types of information resources available in the medical libraries in selected universities in Edo state?

2. To what extent are the information resources in the medical libraries accessible to pre-clinical students in selected universities in Edo state?

3. What are the problems associated with the use of available information resources by pre-clinical students in the medical libraries in selected universities in Edo state?

4. What are the solutions to the problems associated with the use of available information resources in the medical libraries in selected universities in Edo state?

Review of Related Literature

According to Ajayi (2004) information at all levels remains the life-blood of any organization, and the twenty-first century has witnessed remarkable evolution as evident in considerable large increase of technology ranging from bibliographic to full database.

Alan (1993) stated that in the case of medical libraries, the medical practitioner, researcher, students and others in allied fields who are the patrons of the library need up-to-date information frequently in education programmed, diagnostic procedures, and research in various ailments.

Medical libraries are established to support the goals and interests of the institutions in the medical and health fields. Their main objectives can be summarized as follows: Adio (2007):

i To collect the required medical information resources;

ii To organize the collected materials in a suitable way,

iii To retrieve the required information and,

iv To disseminate the retrieved

information to the end user in a suitable time.

Ogunbode (2004) indicated that the philosophy is simple: "to produce health professionals who are responsive to the needs of the community they serve."

Most items in the library's collection should be readily available for consultation in the library and should be available. The application of information technology has revolutionized the mode of acquisition, storage, and dissemination of information. Poisson (1986) and Market R. J., Paris. A. J, Barnes. H. V. et al (1989) observed that computer access to the medical literature has become more convenient than access to MEDLINE on CD-ROM and Online.

Lack of awareness of the availability of some resources in the library can serve as a barrier for medical students. "To be aware of" means to have knowledge or an idea of something, somebody or information that one needs. Boakye (1999) opined that awareness and use of the library's collections thus indicate user's knowledge of the availability of these collections and the use they make of them. He further stated that for medical students to be aware of, and make effective use of the resources, they must be competent in library-use skills, one of which is the ability to use the library's catalogues in search of information. Mann and Clark (1995) said that it has become increasingly important for medical students, who are entering a profession with a life-long learning ethic, to develop an ability to seek out sources on their own and gain facility in exploring new resource. A study by Valentine (1993) revealed that undergraduates looked for the fastest way that would lead to satisfactory results when doing research, going for electronic information resources first. These students felt uncomfortable, however, asking for help in using the library and spent frustrating hours trying to find information. This can affect their use of library resources. This research therefore attempts to assess available information resources in the selected libraries and how much they are accessible to the preclinical students to ascertain whether there is full use of the available resources.

Method
A descriptive survey research design using ex-post facto type was used in this study. The justification for the use of this design was sustained by Kerlinger (2000) when he asserted that survey design is a useful scientific tool in gathering opinion and attitude of people on the subject of study. Also in the ex-post facto type, Asika (1991) asserted that the researcher does not manipulate the variables.

The sampled population for the study is 324. This figure constitutes 10 percent of the total population and it is considered adequate for the study. 109 of the sample was selected from university of Benin, 115 of the sample was selected in Ambrose Alli University while 100 of the sample was selected from Igbinedion University, Okada.

The instrument used for data collection in the study was the questionnaire titled "Availability and use of information resources in medical libraries by pre- clinical students in selected universities in Edo state". (AUIRMLPSEQ)/ The questionnaire was administered to the pre-clinical students in the medical libraries at Igbinedion University, Okada and University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents as they are reading in the medical libraries. The questionnaire was collected from the respondents after responding to it. The data that was obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using simple percentage.

Findings /Background

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by name of university

Name of University	Frequency	Percentage (%)
University of Benin	109	33.64
Ambrose Alli university, Ekpoma	115	35.49
Igbinedion university, Okada	100	30.87
Total	324	100

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by level of study

Level of study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100	92	28.48
200	103	31.79
300	129	39.81
Total	324	100

Table 2.2 shows that majority 129(39.81%) of the respondents are 300 level students of the universities. It can be deduced from the analysis that majority of the respondents are 300 level students.

Table 3: Users' Awareness of Information Resources Available in the Libraries

Information resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Textbooks	318	98.2
Dictionaries	90	89.5
Encyclopedias	260	80.3
Bibliographies	167	51.5
Indexes	133	40.0
Maps/Atlases	204	63
Abstracts	169	52.2
Journals print	178	54.9
Newspapers	232	71.6
Magazines	152	46.9
CD ROM	23	7.1
Internet	36	11.1
Medline	9	2.8
Pop line	9	2.8
HINARI	12	3.7
Index medicus	41	12.7

N=324

Table 3 shows users awareness of information resources is high for print materials such as textbooks,

dictionaries, encyclopedias, newspapers, maps/atlases, journals (print), abstracts, and bibliographies. Awareness is however low for electronic resources such as CD-ROM, Internet, Medline, Pop line, HINARI and Index medicus. This findings tends to agree to the opinion expressed by Ogunyade and Oyibo (2001) that use of MEDLINE on CD-ROM is still very poor among the medical students of the University of Lagos, Nigeria, due to lack of awareness, insufficient personal computers, non periodic training and the high cost of using the facility.

Table 4: Accessibility of Information Resources

	Very well	Well	Not very well	Not at all
On-line Public Access catalogue (OPAC)	16 (4.9%)	42 (13%)	56 (17.3%)	210 (64.8%)
Bibliographies.	37(11.4%)	72 (22.2%)	65 (20.1%)	150 (46.3%)
Abstracts	31(9.6%)	70 (21.6%)	56 (17.3%)	167 (51.5%)
Indexes	38(11.7%)	71 (21.9%)	50 (15.4%)	165 (50.9%)
CD-ROM	17(5.4%)	24 (7.4%)	34 (10.5%)	249 (76.9%)
Internet	34(10.5%0	42 (13%)	35 (10.8%)	213 (65.7%)
Medline	11(3.4%)	22 (6.8%)	30 (9.3%)	261 (80.6%)
Pop line	4(1.2%)	10 (3.1%)	33 (10.2%)	277 (85.5%)
Hilary	3(0.9%)	5 (1.5%)	36 (11.1%)	280 (86.4%)
ICT Centre	30(9.2%)	37 (11.4%)	52 (16.1%)	205 (63.3%)

N=324

In table 4 above, it could be seen that majority of the respondents do not have access to the information resources at all. It could be deduced from the analysis that the pre-clinical students do not have access to the available information resources. The finding of this work supports the work of IFLA (1987) who noted that accessibility is another major issue for the librarian to consider when information is disseminated to patrons. Some libraries prefer closed access in order to ensure adequate security, prevention of constant handling and consequent damage.

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Table 5: Respondents Use of Information Resources

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
Textbooks	**135 (41.67%)**	88 (27.16%)	47 (14.31%)	54 (16.67%)
Dictionaries	76 (23.46%)	53 (16.36%)	53 (16.36%)	142 (43.83%)
Encyclopedias	35 (10.80%)	40 (12.35%)	52 (16.05%)	197 (60.80%)
Directories	21 (6.48%)	33 (10.19%)	37 (11.42%)	233 (71.91%)
Bibliographies	18 (5.56%)	25 (7.72%)	35 (10.80%)	246 (75.93%)
Index medicos	8 (2.47%)	19 (5.86%)	41 (12.65%)	256 (79.01%)
Maps/atlases	18 (5.56%)	32 (9.88%)	67 (20.68%)	207 (63.89%)
Abstracts	10 (3.09%)	26 (8.02%)	49 (15.12%)	239 (73.77%)
Journals (prints)	22 (6.79%)	32 (9.88%)	73 (22.53%)	197 (60.80%)
Newspapers	95 (29.32%)	60 (18.52%)	44 (13.58%)	125 (38.58%)
Magazines	35 (10.80%)	103 (31.79%)	40 (12.35%)	146 (45.06%)
Internet	23 (7.10%)	39 (12.04%)	42 (12.96%)	250 (67.90%)
Medline	6 (1.85%)	9 (2.78%)	17 (5.25%)	292 (90.12%)
Poplin	1 (0.31%)	7 (2.16%)	14 (4.32%)	302 (93.21%)
HINARI	3 (0.93%)	7 (2.16%)	12 (3.70%)	302 (93.21%)
CD-ROM	7(2.16%)	15 (4.63%)	10 (309%)	292 (90.12%)

N=324

Results in Table 5 shows that except for textbooks, majority of the respondents never made use of the information resources. This findings support the work of Unomah (1998) who indicated that that most of the graduates and final year students spend a few hours in their libraries per day. Similarly, Markwei (1990) conducted a survey to evaluate the reference services of the Balme library of the University of Ghana. His findings revealed that many students found using the library's catalogues very difficult.

Table 6: Problems Associated with Use of Information Resources

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I cannot locate books using the catalogue	31 (9.6%)	46 (14.2%)	131 (40.4%)	116 (35.8%)
Missing Textbooks on the shelves	26 (8%)	86 (26.5%)	107 (33.0%)	105 (32.5%)
Low computer literacy	20 (6.2%)	17 (5.3%)	69 (21.3%)	218 (67.2%)
Lack of awareness of library electronic resources.	97 (29.3%)	99 (30.6%)	30 (9.3%)	98 (30.4%)
Occasional breakdown of Internet facilities.	96 (29.6%)	53 (16.4%)	20 (6.2%)	155 (47.8%)
Electronic information resources not easily accessible.	122 (37.7%)	59 (18.2%)	22 (6.7%)	121 (37.4%)
Poor network to browse	86 (26.5%)	44 (13.6%)	88 (27.2%)	106 (32.7%)
Continuous power interruption.	99 ((30.6%)	58 (17.9%)	44 (13.6%)	123 (38%)
Inadequate library facilities for the medical students.	148 (45.7%)	55 (17%)	36 (11.1%)	85 (26.2%)
Library staff are not user friendly.	34 (10.5%)	167 (51.5%)	92 (28.4%)	31 (9.6%)

N=324

The result presented in table 6 shows that majority of the respondents disagreed that locating books using the "catalogue" and "inability to find textbooks on the shelves even though the catalogue indicate their availability" as a problem. Also, majority strongly disagreed that they are not computer literate. However, 97(29.34%), 98(30.25%), 99(20.56%) of the respondents agreed, strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively of the lack of awareness of the MEDLINE. It can also be seen from the table that occasional breakdown of Internet facility, inaccessibility of electronic information resources, loss of signals even when there is power supply and continuous power interruption are not problems associated with the use of information resources. Although a majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the size of the library infrastructure provided are not adequate for the medical students and library staff is not user friendly. This corroborates Jagar (1999) who conducted a survey at the University of Cape Town library to establish what users come to do in the library and to what extent they use the existing catalogues. He came out with the findings that quite a large number of the students come to the library to study and to do their own work rather than to use the resources of the library because it was a problem for them to use library's catalogue to retrieve information. Similarly, Markwei (1990) conducted a survey to evaluate the reference services of the Balme library of the University of Ghana. His findings revealed that many students found using the library's catalogues very difficult. It can be deduced from the analysis that the major problems are unawareness of the MEDLINE, electronic information resources are not easily accessible, the size of the library infrastructures provided are not adequate for the medical students and library staff is not user friendly.

Conclusion

Accessibility of information resources is essential for maximum utilization by pre-clinical students. Pre-clinical student in the selected Universities rated poor access to information resources available in their medical libraries. To ensure maximum utilization of available library resources, Librarians should explore all avenues to create awareness and also develop appropriate skills to identify, locate and use these resources. Recommendations are however made in order for these problems to be solved.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
1. Awareness/orientation programmes should be organized regularly to acquaint them of the importance of the information resources
2. More information resources in electronic version should be made available for the students.
3. The size of the library should be expanded to accommodate the increasing population of the students, and library staff should be friendly to library users.
4. There should be constant electricity to enable them make use of the electronic information resources

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