

Measuring the impact of an information literacy programme for pre-registration nursing students

Bottom Line: Structured information literacy programme improves skills and confidence of undergraduate nursing students. Librarians and academic staff need to collaborate in order to enable implementation of the programme.

Focused Question:

What is the benefit of information literacy sessions for pre-registration nursing students? Is there any evidence that the sessions ought to be made mandatory?

Citation:

Craig A, Corrall S. Making a difference? Measuring the impact of an information literacy programme for pre-registration nursing students in the UK. *Health information and libraries journal*. 2007, 24(2), 118-127.

Search terms:

N/A – Article suggested by colleague

Summary of the aim and methods of the study

- Primary aim was to investigate the effectiveness of IL programme in increasing students' skills and confidence
- Specific objectives were to
 1. test student's skill levels before and after two key sessions,
 2. explore factors affecting their confidence and
 3. identify any relationships between skills, confidence and demographic characteristics
- Mixed-method approach was used:
 1. quantitative (pre- and post- test, Appendix 2) and
 2. qualitative (semi-structured in-depth interview, Appendix 3)
- Participants for the quantitative study comprised the whole February 2005 intake of nursing students at a smaller HE institution in central England (n=76)
- For the qualitative method the aim was to recruit around 10% of those who had completed both tests.

- The researchers who provided questionnaires and interview scripts, and carried out the testing and the analysis of the results were also involved in the delivery of IL programme.
- 70 students completed the pre-test but only 29 students completed both tests due to a change in departmental policy which made the attendance at the sessions no longer compulsory (the change took place half way through the academic year).
- 5 interviews were conducted.
- There was no control group in this study

Main Results:

- The investigation of demographic factors was invalidated by a small pool of students available for interview and low representation of males and different age groups amongst participants who had completed both tests. (only 5 out of 29 were male).
- Based on the comparison of pre- and post- scores for each question 21 students (72%) have improved their IL skills, 5 scored the same (17%) and 3 (10%) performed worse at the post-test.
- The data showed an overall improvement in confidence with 28 (97%) rating themselves 'Fairly' or 'Very confident' at the post- test compared with 22 (76%) previously.
- The results were presented narratively and with tables and figures under the following headings:
 1. Table 1 - Frequency and percentage of correct answers
 2. Table 2 – Skills and confidence levels
 3. Table 3 – Age, skill scores and confidence ratings of interview sample
 4. Figure 1 – Comparison of scores: pre-test and post-test
 5. Figure 2 – Confidence levels: pre-test and post-test

Comments:

- The intervention was not clearly defined. No details were given about the content of IL programme per each session or whether the Department had carried out a satisfaction survey at any stage which may have influenced their decision to make the sessions no longer mandatory.
- Baseline characteristics for the whole intake were not provided (e.g. only 5 males completed both tests, but total number of male students unknown).
- The final group of 29 may have been self selected which would introduce a significant bias. Were they a more or a less confident part of the intake? The questionnaires were not anonymous; the participants had to provide their student ID numbers.

- The criteria for selection of 5 participants for semi structured interview not discussed. Why did they have to receive the questions before the interview?
- The fact that there was no control group in this study is acceptable on ethical grounds, however an investigation of the participants lost to follow up (n=41) would have provided useful data for the analysis (e.g outcome of their course assignments could relate to level of IL skills and confidence)
- Inferences on 'confidence levels' are not substantiated. The perception of one's confidence is opened to very individual interpretations. The questions from pre and post tests related to confidence level may have encouraged participants to assume they had improved.
- Some questions related to IL skills were ambiguous and could have more than one possible answer.
- The results were presented by each question answered but not by each respondent.
- Although faced with a major setback in their study (decision of the Department to make the sessions optional) the researchers did not alter the methodology or review the approach. This may have been due to their personal objectives (was study part of a Dissertation process?)
- The paper does not present enough evidence to argue the effectiveness of IL programme.
- In the abstract and conclusions the authors overstate the mark that they achieved the objectives.

Appraised by: Oxfordshire Health Librarians Journal Club, 16 October 2007