

Scenario:

A Clinical Outreach Librarian is to start to join ward rounds in the New Year. They want to evaluate the Clinical Outreach service now and after joining rounds to see the affect. Does this paper help?

Title:

Evaluating clinical librarian services: a systematic review
Health Information and libraries journal March 2011 28 (1) pp.3-22

Summary of aim and methods of the study:

The aim of the paper was to undertake a systematic review which examines models of clinical librarianship services, quality, methods and perspectives of clinical librarian service evaluations.

1. Build on previous models of clinical librarianship and determine which models of clinical librarian services have been evaluated.
2. To determine whose perspective has been evaluated when evaluating clinical librarian services.
3. To determine the quality of the methods used to evaluate clinical librarian services
4. To determine what outcome measures have been used to evaluate clinical librarian services and establish their appropriateness
5. To update previous reviews evaluating the effectiveness of clinical librarian services.

A systematic review methodology was used to synthesis the evidence.

Main Results:

1. There are four clear models of clinical library service provision
 - a. Question and answer service
 - b. Question and answer service plus critical appraisal
 - c. Outreach
 - d. Outreach plus critical appraisal and synthesis
2. Clinical librarians are effective in saving health professionals time, providing relevant, useful information and high quality services.
3. Clinical librarians have a positive effect on clinical decision making by contributing to better informed decisions, diagnosis and choice of drug or therapy.
4. The quality of clinical librarian studies is improving, but more work is needed on reducing bias and providing evidence of specific impacts on patient care.
5. The Critical Incident Technique (where data relating to specific instances where the library service has had an impact in some way) as part of a mixed method approach appears to offer a useful approach to demonstrating impact.

Comments:

- The aims of the research were clearly stated, and the method of conducting the review clearly outlined.
- It was felt the authors looked for the appropriate sort of paper providing the search strategy and search methods.
- There was an inclusion criteria against which papers where checked. Articles were checked by reviewers against the inclusion criteria in pairs to ensure consistency.
- Included studies were independently critically appraised by at least two reviewers.
- The similarity of the studies made it reasonable to combine the results using a narrative summary to suit the qualitative methods.
- All important outcomes appeared to have been discussed although there were no new outcomes that had not be discussed in previous papers revealed.

Bottom Line:

This paper gives a good overview of recent, predominately UK based, evaluations of clinical outreach services. It would provide a good starting place when devising an evaluation of clinical outreach services, guiding you to look at what model of service you offer and highlighting the need to show impact on patient care if possible.

Appraised by: Oxfordshire Librarians November 2011