

Librarians as Knowledge Transfer Agents for Improved Health Outcomes

Librarians are knowledge workers who play important roles in inter-professional practice, both as members of the health care team and facilitators of knowledge transfer. Here we summarize two examples of librarians' involvement in inter-professional initiatives: the PEAK project, a program where a knowledge broker acts as a conduit between long-term care providers and evidence-based library resources, and the Health Information Network, Calgary Region, a strategic partnership between the University of Calgary Library and health care services in Calgary.

Practice Enhancement Achieved through Knowledge (PEAK)

What was it?

A three year participatory action research project completed in 2007 that was funded by CHSRF (Canadian Health Service Research Foundation) and AHFMR (Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research) for knowledge brokering in a rural setting

Goal was to empower health care professionals in interdisciplinary teams to raise questions from practice, seek evidence-based answers, and create personal learning projects (PLPs) that enhance practice

Proposed the creation of a culture of 1) efficient evidence based decision and policy making; 2) linkage and exchange between healthcare providers, decision and policy makers, and research and health information specialists; and 3) capacity building in evidence based decision making to enhance client care and client safety in a rural healthcare institution

Knowledge brokers 1) facilitated the generation and submission of PLPs by practitioners, 2) assisted managers and teams to select PLPs likely to result in new policies and guidelines, 3) found evidence-based solutions by searching databases, working with local clinical experts and librarians, 4) posted search results and set up staff education sessions, 5) assisted in the creation of evidence-based practice guidelines and policies from solutions to PLPs, 6) implemented and evaluated new practices and 7) monitored new guidelines and policies

"Knowledge cultures benefit from an interdisciplinary approach. This approach brings forward complexity around clinical issues however, this also provides a rich opportunity to review knowledge from many perspectives and design practices that work best for all involved." [1]

Who was involved?

Frontline healthcare staff and clinical/administrative managers from Acute Care, Community Care, Long Term Care, surgical, diagnostic imaging, laboratory and emergency services at the Canmore General Hospital in Canmore, Alberta

University of Calgary Health Sciences Library and Rockyview General Hospital Knowledge Centre librarians provided training, collections access and information retrieval support to the knowledge brokers

Knowledge broker roles are framed as facilitators or uptake specialists and library personnel as the information retrieval specialists

What did it achieve?

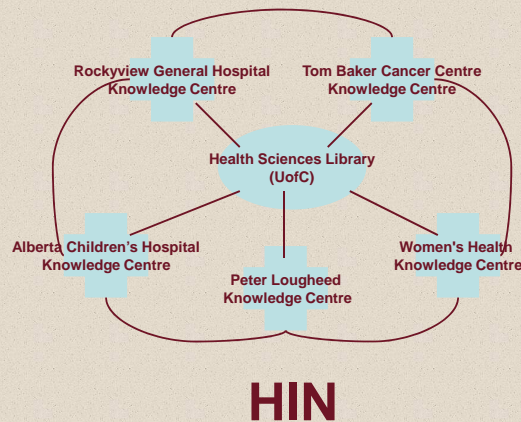
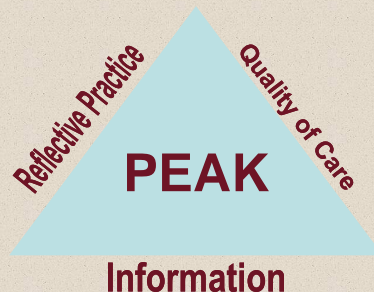
Staff were encouraged to reflect on practice experience and to seek evidence-based solutions to clinical problems

The PEAK model created a culture that empowered frontline health care practitioners to identify areas of need for guideline and policy development

Using the PEAK Model and knowledge brokers as facilitators had a significant, positive impact on team cohesion

Evaluations of the project indicate the group experienced a cultural shift that fostered practice reflection, and information-sharing and team decision-making increase

1. The PEAK Project: Practice Enhancement Achieved Through Knowledge: A knowledge brokering model for rural health care decision makers designed to make a difference to patient safety and quality of care. Final Evaluation Report. December 2007. Calgary Health Region & University of Calgary.



Health Information Network, Calgary Region (HIN)

The Health Information Network is a partnership between the University of Calgary Library and the Calgary Health Region (formalized in 2005) and Tom Baker Cancer Centre of the Alberta Cancer Board (in 2007) to provide a network of library services through Knowledge Centres located in Calgary medical centres to serve the entire region. In May 2008, the Province of Alberta created the Alberta Health Services Board. This organization brings together twelve formerly separate health entities in the province, including the Calgary Health Region and the Alberta Cancer Board.

How Does the HIN Contribute to Inter-professional Practice?

Librarians as Members of the Health Care Team

Conduct literature searches to answer clinical questions at the point of need, or to locate literature for larger planning, policy and research projects, including a pilot project with a librarian attending on clinical rounds

Provide instruction to medical staff on database searching, and use of other print and electronic library resources

Provide credible health information resources and assistance to patients. Each Knowledge Centre has a consumer health collection and staff to assist patients with accessing the information they need

Librarians as Members of the Research Team

HIN librarians hold academic appointments at the University of Calgary and conduct research in areas relevant to librarianship and health information

Movement to electronic collections levels the playing field between practitioners with university appointments and those without, as well as between hospital and non-hospital staff, making collaboration across the region easier.

The Library/Knowledge Centre as an Inter-Professional Meeting Point

Focus groups held with CHR staff regarding their information needs found an appreciation for the library as meeting place. Focus groups expressed the view that the "library facility needs to be a place where people can meet and discuss, think and network"^[1]

HIN Collections and Inter-Professional Practice

A desire for access to electronic resources was a central theme of the focus groups conducted during the pre-HIN needs assessment^[2]

A new website facilitates access to electronic resources and library services – <http://hinc.ucalgary.ca>

New e-resources licensed to HIN via University of Calgary's Collections & Technical Services include UpToDate, EMBASE, e-CPS (Compendium of Pharmaceuticals and Specialties), Natural Standard, and Books@OVID, with more under negotiation

Serials Solutions and SFX, serials management products used by the University of Calgary, have been implemented to manage and improve access to e-journals available to HIN users

1. Calgary Health Region, University of Calgary. Making Information Count: An Integrated Knowledge Services for Healthcare Practitioners, Staff, Patients and Their Families (internal report), p. 24.
2. Ibid, pp. 22-25.