ABSTRACT

Objectives:

One of the most intriguing challenges in medical librarianship is the integration of the librarian into the clinical rounding team to provide service at the point-of-care. The purpose of this study is to apply the techniques of qualitative research to gain a better understanding of the experiences of clinical librarians including personal fears, ethical issues, and emotional barriers that inhibit individual success in the clinical environment.

Methods:

To identify common concerns, focusing on emotional barriers, ethical issues, physical practicalities, and building confidence, librarians at the UF Health Science Center Libraries conducted an internal, reflective focus group session. Then, drawing on that collective personal experience, we created an anonymous, online survey dispersed to the medical librarian community via social networking tools and listservs to gather wider experience and data.

The data presented here are preliminary results from the initial focus group and early survey results (as of April 1, 2011).

Results:

The data presented here are preliminary results from the initial focus group and early survey results (as of April 1, 2011).

1. Dealing with patient death:
   - Distressed by cases or what you see or smell (research, necros, blood, odor, abused, etc.)
   - Dealing with psychiatric patients/menightly
   - Dealing with medical crisis/emergency
   - Variations in what disturbs each individual

2. Ethical issues:
   - Introducing yourself to patients
   - Developing relationships with team members
   - Finding your advocate (connects to #5 below)

3. Dealing with physicians’ expectations and one’s own lack of familiarity with clinical personnel, hierarchy and environment:
   - Understanding medical culture
   - Being comfortable with the environment and physical setting
   - Understanding team hierarchy and composition (who is who?)
   - Dealing with lack of confidence/nervousness

4. Recognizing that the learning process happens mainly ‘on the job’ or as self-directed exploration:
   - Looking things up afterwards
   - Learning on the job
   - Seeking learning opportunities
   - Self-education
   - Preparation needs: medical terminology, slang, medical shorthand, acronyms, jargon, glossary, learning the numbers

5. Establishing value, identifying advocates, and measuring outcomes:
   - Anecdotal evidence (personal responses)
   - Literature
   - Publication collaboration
   - Solutions to health speak
   - Other methods?

Conclusions:

Medical librarians entering the arena of clinical care face personal, emotional, and professional challenges. Our results suggest that learning is primarily a self-directed, ‘on-the-job,’ experiential process rather than formal preparation through official training or classroom participation. Most librarians lack training regarding hierarchy, roles, culture, and language in the clinical environment. Our initial results suggest that preparation in these issues may be vital to improving confidence and success.

Future Research Plans Include:

1. Further examination of survey data
2. Continuing Focus Groups and Interviews
3. Developing continuing education resources and support for clinical librarians

We invite you to participate!!