

Editorial – Standards in Health Library Infrastructure for Post-Graduate Medical Training Accreditation

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Editor's Note

While health librarians are excellent advocates for their position, their profession, and their proficiency, sometimes it is very nice when others share the heavy lifting. The following letter is written by an orthopaedic surgeon in Queensland Health, in response to an article recently published in the Medical Journal of Australia, about health libraries providing crucial support for Australian medical training programs.

I support Siemensma et al's¹ call for standards in health library infrastructure for post-graduate medical training accreditation.

For too long the health library has been seen as a low priority in hospital budgets when competing with clinical and environmental services. During my training and locum work visiting many hospital libraries, I found the physical space and staffing of library are unrelated to hospital sizes, although libraries in smaller hospitals tend to be lacklustre and often a small room at the far end of the campus, with limited opening hours. The Canberra Hospital library with its impressive and accessible resources is the quintessence of a health library.

Many clinicians nowadays access information via the internet, downloading contents online through hospital or medical college portals; this appears to support the viewpoint that healthcare libraries no longer need to have a sizeable physical presence in the hospital compound, if at all, since many online supports can be delivered offsite in a commercial building.

This, however, is a fallacy.

Recent graduates rely on google searching to collect information more than state health library resources or medline portals. The role of library staff in educating new staff in utilising services is ever more important for clinicians' future careers.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons library services are exemplary. However, many other medical colleges and associations, despite their core duties in specialty training, provide very poor access to educational resources beyond position statements and limited selection of articles. Trainees can only rely on state health library resources and hospital-affiliated university libraries for access to journals and

books; this can be highly variable and no better than those of non-training doctors, nursing and allied health staff.

Health libraries also provide Inter-Library Loan services and fulfilling document requests. These are mostly achieved through electronic sharing of online resources between state health libraries and tertiary institutions, though some still need access to physical journal prints in library collections. With physical space available to hospital libraries at constant risk of downsizing, access to classic but highly influential papers and sentinel articles is going to be lost through bureaucratic rationalisation.

Libraries can also be a conducive space for learning, away from clinical areas and family homes.

Reference

1. Siemensma G, Griffith A, Anderson A, Smith A. Time to set a standard for the standards: health libraries provide crucial support for Australian medical training programs. *Med J Aust.* 2024 Jun 17;220(11):544-545.