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A new collaboration: Consumer health information training  
for Queensland's Moreton Bay Region libraries.

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# A NEW COLLABORATION:

## Consumer health information training for Queensland's Moreton Bay Region libraries

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### **Introduction**

Redcliffe and Caboolture Hospitals' Librarian identified an opportunity to deliver a program in support of *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers* (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2017b). The program entailed the development and delivery of training in health information and consumer health to the public librarians employed by the Moreton Bay Region Libraries (MBRL). The program aimed to improve MBRLs' public librarians' health knowledge and, in turn, their ability to support their clients; the general public and health consumer.

### **Background**

The Australian population has "poor" health literacy at 60% (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2017a). Within the Moreton Bay Regional Council (MBRC) area, socio-economic indicators show the local situation is even worse (Redcliffe Hospital, 2017). The MBRC area has one of the fastest growing aging populations in Queensland at 11.1%, compared with the average of 8.2% and 15.2% of Redcliffe Hospital's catchment (Redcliffe Hospital, 2017). This increases the likelihood of "poor" health literacy levels for the area's residents.

Health librarians are trained in consumer health and health literacy. As evidenced in the literature, the public library is the place where many consumers go to find health information (Flaherty, 2013, and, Yi, 2015). With this in mind, the Health Librarian was concerned at the level of health information knowledge of the public library staff

supporting these clients. Review of the MBRL's website also caused concern due to some of the links and websites recommended.

While public librarians are not specifically trained in health, they are at the forefront of the provision of reference (information) services to their clients (members of the public). (Flaherty, 2013, and, Yi, 2015). The public library role with health literacy may include areas such as:

- Direct support through reference services (answering health information queries from members of the public),
- Providing resources to support health literacy (including information communication technologies, print and/or media resources),
- Teaching and supporting health information literacy skills to library staff and clients,
- Teaming with health advocates to improve information provision,
- Teaming with health librarians to collaborate on projects and develop staff health literacy skills,
- Hosting health information sessions for clients in conjunction with health advocates and specialists,
- Mounting displays to promote health literacy and health topics; and,
- Developing websites to direct clients to high quality and reliable sources.

The Health Librarian drafted a training outline and then contacted senior staff at the MBRL offering to provide on-site staff training; MBRL accepted the offer. The Health Librarian developed a presentation (with handouts) and presented it over two sessions.

## **Uptake of Training**

A total of sixteen librarians participated in the one-hour training, six at the Caboolture Public Library, and ten at the North Lakes Public Library sessions. The Librarians attended from libraries across the MBRL; eight libraries of the eleven MBRL were represented. The Librarians that participated were required by MBRL to share their newly gained knowledge with their own staff and colleagues on return to their respective workplaces.

The training was also an opportunity to discuss the MBRL's website and recommended health links. It also enabled the introduction of the *Words for Wellbeing* program developed by Ipswich Hospital and adapted by Redlands' Hospital Library; a series of flyers and materials aimed at health consumers.

## **Evaluation**

Pre and post training surveys were conducted to assess the training outcomes.

## Survey results:

- 94% showed increase in their confidence to provide reference services on health information.
- 100% had a greater understanding of health information and their ability to assist their clients.
- 100% had their training goals met or exceeded.
- 100% had learned something new.
- 94% would use what they had learned.
- 100% rated the usefulness and content and resources provided as useful to extremely useful.

Comments and responses from participants also highlighted the value of this program. Sections of note were the introduction to *My Health Record*, websites including *HealthDirect* (an Australian website), *Health on the Net* (as an evidence based search engine and independent verification of health websites), the UK National Health Service's *Behind the Headlines*, and, the health advocacy and information on support groups (e.g. Diabetes Australia, etc.).

The participants' responses are indicative of the value of this training program. Follow up with participants in six months to see if the training and learnings were put into daily practice would add to the evidence of this program's worth.

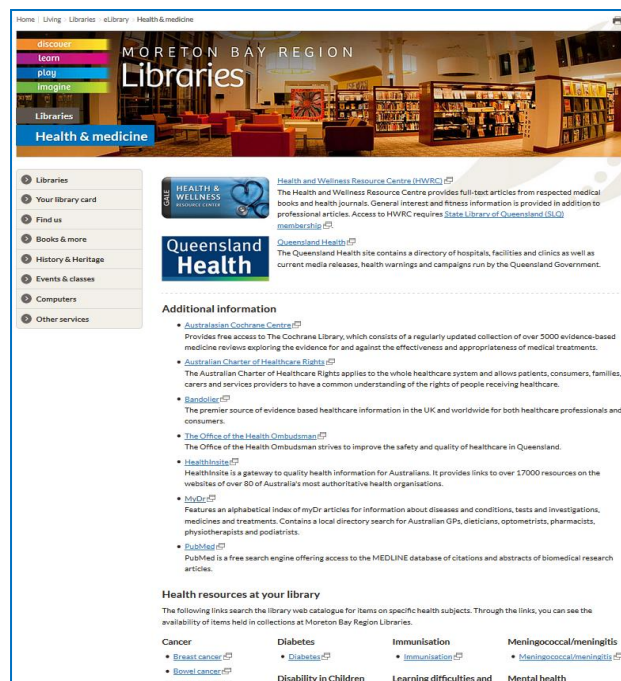


Figure 1. Moreton Bay Regional Council Libraries website November 2017.

## Website Changes:

Changes to the MBRL website are further evidence of the value of the program. These changes include the addition of the Queensland Health website and a range of high-quality evidence-based consumer health websites and topical links.

## Linked topics now include:

- Cancer
- Children's Mental Health
- Diabetes
- Disability in Children
- Heart disease
- Immunisation
- Learning difficulties and disorders
- Meningococcal/meningitis
- Mental health
- Pregnancy and childbirth

## **Future Collaboration**

Linkages with the MBRL will be maintained and strengthened in the coming twelve months through an offer to answer staff health information queries. If required, the Health Librarian is also willing to run the training session on site again.

The participating librarians were supplied with the slide-based training program to enable sharing of relevant sections with their own staff. The presentation was aimed at the highly skilled reference librarian level. Select sections from the presentation could be used to present in smaller segments for other staff employed within the libraries (eg useful websites, scope of practice: ie when not to give advice, etc.)

It would be preferable to extend the time allotted for the training plus valuable for the sessions to have a "hands-on" component to allow participants to discover and explore the websites presented. This would depend on availability of computer training rooms.

The Health Librarian will share the results of this program with the other Queensland Health Librarians. The training will further be offered to the State Library of Queensland "Public Libraries Connect" program, responsible for supporting all Queensland public libraries.

## **Learnings for the Health Librarian**

Several learnings came from the program including:

1. The sessions need to be longer; it is a lot of information to share within one hour;
2. Sessions would best be presented in a computer training room to allow hands-on access and experimentation with the resources presented. (Attendee numbers may be limited.);
3. Continue to build relationships with the MBRL (with a focus on consumer health and health literacy);
4. Look at initiating the *Words for Wellness* program with MBRL;
5. Provide advice on website links for the MBRL website (if/when changes are required);
6. Create "bite-size" sessions for non-professional staff;
7. Develop relationship with State Library of Queensland Public Libraries Connect Program Coordinator (with possibility to deliver training);
8. Follow up with MBRL to see if the program has made a difference in day to day reference services to clients requiring health information.

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