Partners in Research Literacy: Librarians and Educators

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Introduction
The crisis in scholarly communication, the increased emphasis on evidence-based practice, and research literacy highlight the need for information literacy education. The ability to effectively retrieve and critically evaluate information is not innate. Learners at all levels may find the proliferation of electronic resources unmanageable/daunting. Information professionals (aka librarians) are experts in managing information as important competencies. (3-6)

As library faculty instructors, the authors observed students relying on resources of questionable quality. As a result, in 2006, we developed a workshop for 2nd and 3rd year medical students. (7) This course has been successfully taught for the past seven years.

Additionally, our experience and the literature show faculty may feel ill-equipped to challenge their learners’ information skills. (8) Realizing the need for instructing both student and faculty audiences (9), we redesigned the School of Medicine (SOM) elective as a continuing education program to address this demand.

Methods
The educational programs described here consist of a pass/fail elective and a health sciences continuing education workshop. The elective, five sessions totaling 7.5 contact hours, was condensed as a 3.5 hour workshop to meet faculty time constraints.

Course objectives
• Define scholarly communication and online publishing
• Utilize resources and strategies for searching current best evidence
• Critically evaluate information and resources
• Apply methods for managing and presenting information

Instructional format
• Case based scenarios
• Question formulation – PICO format
• Peer learning

Evaluation
• Pre/Post self assessment questionnaire (elective only)
• Anonymous post-course School of Medicine evaluations

Results
Both programs consistently receive high marks. Qualitative and quantitative evaluation data report high satisfaction with the hands-on format, introduction to and practice with unfamiliar resources, as well as information management instruction. Student evaluations illustrate the value of the elective in relation to their coursework, clinical and research experiences. Faculty feedback benefits the library to themselves as clinicians/researchers and in their role as educators.

Due to the success of these programs, the authors were invited to incorporate this content into a College of Pharmacy drug information elective. Content revision is in progress for a College of Nursing elective.

Conclusion
The ability to effectively retrieve and critically evaluate information is not innate. Learners at all levels may find the proliferation of electronic resources unmanageable/daunting. Information professionals (aka librarians) are experts in teaching, navigating, evaluating, and managing the variety of available resources. Students and educators should avail themselves of these knowledgeable practitioners and teaching partners to incorporate research literacy skills in courses throughout the curricula.

References