A Study on usage of Electronic information sources by the medical students of University of Jaffna.

Komathy Murugathas

Senior Assistant Librarian, Medical Library, University of Jaffna
*jaffnamed@gmail.com

Electronic Information Sources (EIS) are more widely used by academic institutions to support teaching, learning and research activities. They are vital information sources in medical education, but extremely expensive. The objective of the study was to investigate the usage of EIS by the medical students of University of Jaffna. Further, the study identified the students' perception with regard to the EIS and the problems they encountered in using these sources. The survey method research study was used with a pretested self-administered questionnaire as a research instrument. Total student population of the study was 640. A stratified random sample of 300 students was selected proportionately distributed among each batch. The raw data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by using simple statistical methods as percentages and summation of weighted mean values.

The response rate was 71%, of whom 75% of the medical students use the internet daily. The main purpose of using the internet was learning. It was followed by research. Majority of the students (68%) use their own devices to access EIS, because of the inadequacy in computers available in the library for the students' usage. Majority of the respondents felt that EIS were important. Though many students responded that they were competent in computer knowledge, majority (86%) of them were searching information by self-taught as trial and error or with the help of their colleagues emphasizing the need for a formal training. Majority of the students are unaware of the resources subscribed by University Grants Commission. Further, the study identified that students prefer electronic formats to get quick and brief information and print format for in depth study. Regarding their perception about the EIS faster communication, able to perform better research activities, provision of more comprehensive information were emphasized. Unable to download full text articles, frequent power failure, low speed of the internet connectivity and inadequate time to search information were the main problems among the medical students in accessing EIS. It is the prime responsibility of the university to consider the subscription of electronic sources such as full text databases, e-journals and reference books. It is recommended to increase the number of computers in the library for the students' usage and improve the speed of the internet connectivity for the effective use of EIS. It could be suggested that library can conduct awareness programs and hands on training workshop in effective searching techniques to the medical students.