



**Clinical Librarian Service:** Providing research evidence at the point of clinical need



## Workshop 4:

# Continuing Professional Development for Clinical Librarians

'If you could ask one question about clinical librarianship, what would it be?'

In response to this question, many of you asked about the skills, knowledge and experience needed to work as a clinical librarian. In this workshop we explore some of the issues raised:

- What specific skills and knowledge are needed to work as a clinical librarian?
- Is the role more difficult for anyone without a medical/nursing/scientific background?
- How can inexperienced librarians best equip themselves to take on the role of clinical librarian?

## FEEDBACK from the workshop

### *Towards a definition*

The twenty-five delegates who signed up for this session began by trying to define the unique elements of a clinical librarian service.

Words and phrases identified were:

**Proactive, Outreach, Clinical context, Flexibility,**

**Multidisciplinary, Approachable, Partnership.**

### *Skills, knowledge and experience*

We then broke up into smaller groups to consider the skills, knowledge and experience that might be needed in someone working (or hoping to work) as a clinical librarian.

Feeding back to the larger group produced a list that confirmed and added to one prepared earlier. Characteristics of and potential learning needs for clinical librarians were identified as:

<b>Personal</b> Self-confidence Resilience Ability to network / overcome barriers A proactive learner Communication (written / verbal) Negotiation / reference interview Time management / organisational skills Presentation skills	<b>Medical knowledge</b> Terminology Basic Anatomy & Physiology Subject
<b>Information retrieval</b> Health Info. Resources Structured clinical questions (PICO) Advanced searching skills Methodological filters	<b>Research methodology</b> Critical appraisal Statistics
<b>Health Libraries experience</b> NHS organisation EBP	<b>Marketing</b>
<b>Teaching / training skills</b>	<b>IT</b>

No doubt this list could be extended. If you would like to add (or challenge) any of these, please contact us and we can post your comments to the site.

It is unlikely that anyone can bring all of these to a post of clinical librarian. Past experience and training will fulfil some of these criteria and the list can be used to identify learning needs for the individuals concerned.

### ***Meeting learning needs***

The groups then went on to consider how these learning needs could be met, choosing two or three of the topics identified, each group discussed how the needs could be met with different kinds of intervention. This can be used as a framework for identifying ways of meeting learning needs although time was against us so only a few suggestions are listed here.

Formal	Informal	Self-directed	Networking / the library community	Other
Internal / external e.g. <u>For critical appraisal skills</u> CARE in the Northwest Region <a href="#">CASP</a> workshops  <u>For searching with methodological filters</u> <a href="#">ADEPT</a> from SchARR at Sheffield University  Marketing various formal courses available.	Informal peer support such as that reported from the Netherlands and Scotland (SHINE)  Jerome RN (see refs below) reports the process of peer support (in searching and appraising the evidence) practiced at Vanderbilt University Medical Centre, USA  Shadowing	Personal study of Evidence Based practice.  The use of websites such as <a href="#">CASP</a>	Discussion lists  Conferences	

By considering a range of learning strategies, it is possible to accommodate different learning styles and match new learning to previous skills, knowledge and experience.

Issues that arose during the discussions were around:

The difficulty of recruiting staff with the full range of skills needed

Which of the skills are essential?

Medical knowledge and information skills – are both necessary or can we recruit staff with either?

Is NHS experience essential? What qualities are needed in someone without this – we concluded that it needed to be someone who could be proactive and able to network within the organisation.

We ran out of time and could have continued the discussion.

Please feel free to contribute to the debate.

Linda Ward  
Clinical Librarian

## Useful References

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Health Care Libraries Unit, Oxford & Anglia. Librarian of the 21st Century. Continuing Professional Development <http://www/lib.jr2.ox.ac.uk/ldp.html>

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