

# Medical librarian gives physicians access to latest information available

By MARY PAT MURPHY  
FOR THE DAILY INTER LAKE

Physicians at Kalispell Regional Medical Center have immediate access to the latest medical information available worldwide through the hospital's medical library, staffed by a professional librarian trained to research medical questions.

Medical Librarian Heidi Sue Adams quickly can track down information from a wide variety of sources to provide information needed to help physicians diagnose and treat their patients.

"I can actually get an article faster from a library in Guam than from the library down the street," Adams said. "We can get articles anywhere in the world and can send articles anywhere in the world."

Adams, who has been at Kalispell Regional Medical Center since November 1998, is just the second person to serve as librarian since a group of physicians established the medical library in 1975 at the old hospital in downtown Kalispell. The first librarian, Susan Schweinsberg Long, is now librarian at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle.

Kalispell Regional is one of just 11 of the 63 hospitals in Montana that are full members of the National Network of Libraries of Montana. Full membership requires that the library be staffed by a profes-

sional librarian with specialized training in the medical library area.

Adams, who received her training at Drexel University in Philadelphia, didn't set out to be a librarian.

She was studying information technology and was required to take a librarian class, something she resisted because of her preconceived idea about librarians.

"I was not planning to be a librarian," she said. "You will never see my hair in a bun."

But once she started learning about the research involved with library science, she was hooked.

"I couldn't believe people get paid to do this," she said. "You get to learn something new every day."

Her medical searches cover a wide range of information, and often time is of the essence.

"When you're serving a trauma center, you have to get information fast," she said. "We need to get that information as soon as possible, so it keeps you on your toes, but that's the

fun of it."

During fiscal year 2007, the medical library performed 612 literature searches, borrowed 780 articles from other libraries and sent out 580 articles to libraries that requested them. A total of 1,117 articles were photocopied during that period.

Adams delivers the articles electronically or in person, depending on the physicians' preference. She figures she can send an article electronically in two minutes or deliver it within four minutes anywhere in the hospital complex.

Her primary clients are medical staff members of Kalispell Regional, and secondary clients are other medical professionals. As time allows, she lends her expertise to the public.

"As a librarian, I will not turn people away," she said. "I will help them partner with their physician to get the best medical care."

Using a funding award from the National Library of Medicine, Adams helped train other libraries in the region



Photos by Trevon Baker Photography

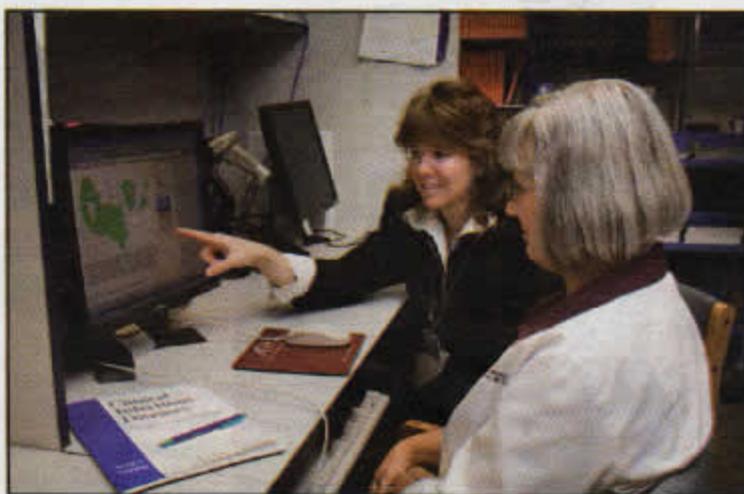
MEDICAL LIBRARIAN Heidi Sue Adams looks up information in the medical library at Kalispell Regional Medical Center. She has been the librarian at the hospital for nearly 10 years.

to research medical information. Health information providers are available locally at Flathead Valley Community College, the Flathead County Health Department, the Flathead County library, Flathead High School library, the Kalispell Regional Cancer Center patient resource library

and North Valley Hospital. Adams is available to set up training on request for agencies that serve the public.

A vast array of medical information—and misinformation—is available on the Internet, she said, and it can be difficult

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MEDICAL LIBRARIAN Heidi Sue Adams helps Shari Courser, a registered nurse in Kalispell Regional's Infection and Prevention Control Department, look up information on the Internet.

As medical librarian, 'You learn something new every day.'

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to separate the wheat from the chaff.

She recommends two sites for consumers looking for accurate information: medlineplus.gov and cancer.gov. She also recommends the mini-library in the Cancer Center for people seeking cancer information, and noted that the new Bass Center for Surgical Oncology

(currently under construction) also will have a library dedicated to information concerning breast disease and care.

The medical library is open 24/7 to hospital employees who need to research information after hours, though it is staffed only Monday through Friday. Adams is the library's only paid employee, and she is helped by volunteers.

"Thank goodness for volun-

teers. They make the world go around," she said.

Adams loves the challenge of her job, and enjoys helping people find the information they need.

"I love to support our health care providers in providing the best care possible," she said. "We have a lot of really good physicians on staff here, and I'm always learning from them, too."