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Background

Our research goal was to assess the impact of the health sciences library, information services, and the librarian on patient care. The study replicated the approach taken in an earlier study conducted in the Rochester, New York area (Marshall, 1992). In designing the new study, the planning group took into account the changing health care and information technology environments.

Methods

Data collection methods: 1) two preliminary focus groups of librarians who had interviewed their administrators about the value of library services; 2) a web survey of health professionals at 56 sites serving 118 hospitals; and 3) 24 telephone interviews of health professionals designed to further explore the value of the library, information services and the librarian. A pilot study was conducted at seven sites prior to the full launch. The survey used a Critical Incident Technique (CIT) in which the health professionals were asked to base their responses on a recent situation in which they had searched for information for patient care that was not available in the patient record, EMR system or lab results. Respondents provided search details related to 16,122 information seeking incidents (5,379 from physicians, 2,123 from residents and 6,788 from nurses). The estimated response rate was 10%. Each site received a PowerPoint presentation with results for their own site, their own dataset, and the combined study results for benchmarking.

Participating sites by region

Region	Libraries (n)
Middle Atlantic*	23
Greater Midwest	12
Southeastern Atlantic	7
Pacific Southwest	4
Pacific Northwest	3
South Central	2
Mid-Continental	1
Canada	4
Total	56

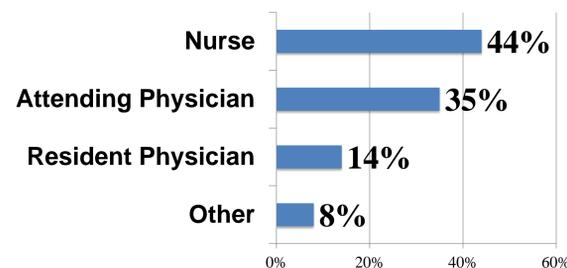
Participating site characteristics

	Sites (n=56)
Council of Teaching Hospitals member	77%
Urban location	86%
Bed size:	
Less than 500	45%
500 or more	54%

Age distribution of respondents

	Percent
Under 25	1%
25-44	47%
45-64	47%
Over 64	4%

Positions held by respondents

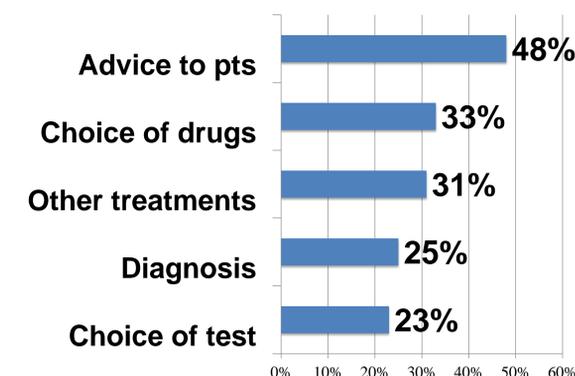


Survey Results

Handled the situation differently

	Overall (n=13,737)
Definitely Yes	31%
Probably Yes	44%
Probably No	21%
Definitely No	4%

Changes in patient care



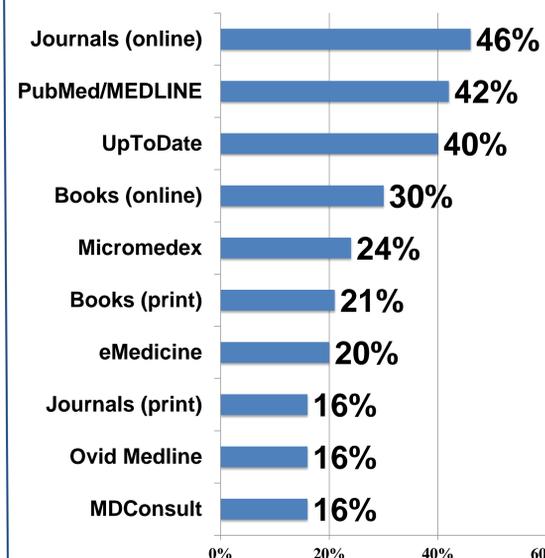
Information sources rated as important or very important

Source	Overall (n)
Library/Information resources	97% (12,027)
Discussion with colleagues	92% (11,038)
Lab tests	87% (9,810)
Diagnostic imaging	80% (8,708)

Value of information

	% (n)
Resulted in a better informed clinical decision	95% (12,329)
Contributed to higher quality of care	95% (12,529)
Substantiated my prior knowledge or belief	95% (12,332)
Provided new knowledge	92% (12,083)
The information saved me time	85% (11,887)

Library resources used*



*Respondents could check more than one resource.

Adverse events avoided

	Overall (n=12,910)
Patient misunderstanding	23%
Additional tests	19%
Misdiagnosis	13%
Adverse drug reaction/interaction	13%
Medication error	12%
Patient mortality	6%

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