

AI 08 Library use and Internet searching habits of medical students: a case study of University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

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This paper reports a survey on the use of library and Internet among medical students of University of Ruhuna. Out of 572 students 300 who frequently use the medical library for their information needs were randomly selected for this study. A structured questionnaire was distributed among them through the library circulation counter and data were analyzed using the quantitative methods. Overall response rate to the survey was 95% and the study revealed that all students visit the library to borrow text books. PubMed was the popular and widely used by them (88%) to seek research articles from internet. The survey found that 68% have their own computers with Internet connection and 52% of them frequently access to find information. It was shown that they access to Internet at home due to the slow internet connection (89%), lack of time in the faculty (49%) and inadequacy of computers provided (44%). Majority of students (76%) use search engines for web searching and 27% of them are familiar with medical subject gateways. Though the Google (98%) is the frequently used search engine, only 11% use Google scholar. Medical students (77%) generally use keywords to retrieve information. But, they have neglected the effective search techniques such as Boolean operators and truncation search. As recommendations, awareness programmes for medical students regarding the library OPAC, HINARI database, web searching techniques; availability of reference facilities for the medical professionals are suggested. Increasing of bandwidth to provide faster Internet access; conducting of information literacy programme for all medical students; linking free online medical databases on the library web page are highly noted to implement. In addition, it is suggested to include "Medical Information Literacy" as a course module in the curriculum of undergraduate and postgraduate courses on Medicine in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: library usage, internet usage, searching habits, medical information seeking