



*Evidence Summary*

**Medical School Librarians Need More Training to Support their Involvement in Evidence Based Medicine Curricula**

**A Review of:**

Maggio, L. A., Durieux, N., & Tannery, N. H. (2015). Librarians in evidence based medicine curricula: A qualitative study of librarian roles, training, and desires for future development. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 34(4) 428-440. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2015.1082375>

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**Received:** 1 Mar. 2016

**Accepted:** 20 Apr. 2016

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**Abstract**

**Objective** – To describe the self-perceived role of librarians in developing evidence based medicine (EBM) curricula and identify their current and desired level of training to support these activities.

**Design** – Multi-institutional qualitative study.

**Setting** – Nine medical schools in Canada and the United States of America.

**Subjects** – Nine librarians identified by medical school faculty as central to the provision of EBM training for medical students at their institution.

**Methods** – The researchers designed a semi-structured interview schedule based on a review of the literature and their own experiences as librarians teaching EBM. The topics covered were; librarians' perceptions of their roles in relation to the curriculum, the training required to enable them to undertake these roles, and their professional development needs. The interviews were conducted by telephone and then audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The authors present five main themes; curricular design, curricular deployment, curricular assessment, educational training, and professional development. Profiles were developed for each participant based on the latter two themes and from this information common characteristics were identified.

**Main Results** – The participants described the importance of collaboration with faculty and student bodies when designing a curriculum. Information literacy instruction and specifically literature searching and forming a research question were taught by all of the participants to facilitate curricular deployment. Some of the librarians were involved or partly involved in curricular assessment activities such as formulating exam questions or providing feedback on assignments. Educational training of participants varied from informal observation to formal workshops offered by higher education institutions. All librarians indicated a willingness to partake in professional development focused on teaching and EBM.

The subjects' perceptions of their roles are supported by Dorsch and Perry's themes of the librarian's role in curricular design, deployment, and assessment. The educational training received by participants included formal training and experiential and self-directed learning activities.

Finally, the librarians identified their professional development needs going forward. The majority of participants indicated that they would like to attend workshops run by universities or the Medical Library Association. Others wanted to invite and host guest speakers at their own institutions. Librarians identified financial restraints and geographic location as barriers to attending professional development events.

**Conclusion** – Librarians can be actively involved in the delivery of EBM instruction in medical schools. However, they require additional educational opportunities to enable them to develop in this role. Online training could be a viable option for self-directed learning to overcome financial and geographic constraints.

### Commentary

Blanco, Capello, and Dorsch (2014) and Maggio et al. (2016) have also reported on librarians' roles in EBM design, implementation, and assessment. The strength

of this study is that it identifies librarians' perceptions of their own training needs. This study is presented as a starting point for exploring barriers to education and training requirements for librarians involved in EBM curricula. It was conducted within a larger qualitative study which aimed to capture barriers, as perceived by faculty, to EBM learning for medical students (Maggio et al., 2016). The authors pre-selected Dorsch and Perry's framework (Dorsch & Perry, 2012) to analyse the role of health sciences librarians in providing EBM instruction.

The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) is a tool designed for studies featuring qualitative interviews. Checklist items 29-32, which specifically refer to aspects of the reporting process, are: Quotations presented, Consistency of data and findings, Clarity of major themes, and Clarity of minor themes. (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007)

The study does not adequately satisfy the first two COREQ checklist items above. First, the authors present quotations to communicate participant perspectives within the thematic analysis and state that they attempted to include participants across the institutions through quotations presented. However, the quotations are not assigned to identifiers (e.g., participant number), so it is not demonstrated that a range of participants have contributed to the data. Second, the data in this study is consistent with findings in the wider literature particularly in relation to the librarian as teacher and their curricular responsibilities. Nevertheless, the authors find that the participant data highlights the lack of librarian assessment of learning, despite the variety of resources available to EBM teachers.

The presentation of major and minor themes demonstrates the strengths of the reporting aspects of the research article. The five major themes are clearly presented and each is explored in a dedicated section in the results. Diverse cases were reported, such as the singular study participant using a validated tool to assess student learning. Some minor themes also emerged from the findings

focusing on specific gaps in teaching knowledge and skills, for example, the necessity of learning how to teach on the job due to the lack of pedagogical curriculum in academic library training courses.

A practical implication of this study as noted by the authors, is the need for increased opportunities for continuing education for librarians. In the parent study, faculty identified barriers to EBM learning for students (Maggio et al., 2016). In order for librarians to position themselves on a par with other faculty members and contribute to EBM curricula in a valuable way, they should be educated to a level that allows them to effectively perform in this role.

Further research is required to assess the extent to which the findings could be extended to guide the planning and development of training for librarians not based at medical schools. The authors recognise that the study findings may not be generalizable to a wider population of librarians since the methods employed to select participants involved a process whereby only a specific population met the inclusion criteria.

In a larger survey by Blanco et al. (2014), the authors found that librarians were not sharing innovative approaches. This study would have benefited from investigating whether participants are effective at communicating EBM teaching strategies.

## References

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