BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Stribling, JC, editor. **The Clinical Medical Librarian's Handbook**. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield; 2020. Paperback: 172 p. ISBN: 978-1-5381-2770-4. Price: USD\$60.00. Available from:

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538127704/The-Clinical-Medical-Librarian's-Handbook>

A clinical medical librarian (CML) is a specific type of medical librarian who works on the floors with clinicians, serving as a member of the patient care team, and provides information to clinicians at the point of care. This titular librarian, in *The Clinical Medical Librarian's Handbook* was pioneered by Gertrude Lamb at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UKMC), in the 1970's.

While the initial chapter introduces the concept of the CML and how it came to be, subsequent chapters discuss the variety of work the CML can be involved in, at a variety of institutions where the CML program has been implemented. Ranging from overarching descriptions of CML programs, to offering advice for new librarians in CML roles, *The Clinical Medical Librarian's Handbook* covers the evolution of CMLs from Lamb's original conception to where CMLs have their sights set today, and the realms where CMLs are working in their institutions. Edited by Judy K. Stribling and featuring chapters from multiple CMLs, this book is written by those with a wealth of experience, intended for an audience who belong anywhere along the spectrum of CML programs; from those considering the creation to those entrenched who are looking for inspiration to innovate and refresh their services.

For the new medical librarian, this book is a great primer for what can be done in a large hospital setting. The book leads you from the origins of CML programs into a series of chapters

designed to provide you with advice, examples, and suggestions for setting up CML programs, as well as the variety of work CMLs are doing in their institutions. Chapter 2 focuses on providing suggestions to the new CML on ways to build relationships and work effectively in their institutions, while chapters 3-5 discuss patient- and family-centred care in the context of CML programs. Later chapters examine the role of the CML in public health, ways to promote library technologies and resources, how to demonstrate the value of CMLs to administration, the CML role in teaching evidence-based medicine, on-the-job training for new CMLs, and how to develop a CML program at your institution. The flow of the book is somewhat choppy; each chapter stands alone well, but the wide-ranging set of topics did not always connect together well. I felt the order could have been improved, moving the chapters with practical advice for implementing CML programs (chapters 2, 10 and 11) together, and chapters which detailed program descriptions (chapters 5, 7 and 9) together for better flow.

While I found this book to be an interesting history of CML programs, it was quickly apparent that the editor and I have a different idea of what constitutes a handbook. There are more program descriptions in this book than practical advice. Some chapters stand out as the kind of advice I expected from this book, such as *Chapter 2: Creating Clinical Partnerships*, by Judy C. Stribling and Antonio P. DeRosa, which provides concrete suggestions for a new medical librarian, but most of the others do not. Instead, the book reads as a collection tracing CML programs through time, from the original innovation of Gertrude Lamb to the present-day iterations of CML programs across several institutions. The spread of CMLs to several institutions speaks to the strength of the program, the need for point-of-

care access to reputable information, and the necessity of the CML to the care team for providing that information.

For librarians who work at smaller institutions, *The Clinical Medical Librarian's Handbook* will not be as helpful for supporting your work. The preface makes this clear when it states “each contributor to this text – from library director to consumer health librarian – practices in a major urban academic medical center...” For those who don't work in those kinds of environments, you will likely be frustrated while reading the pieces in this book, as the program descriptions and guidance are targeted to those who work in large urban medical centres. The reality of many medical library staff does not always align with the advice which is given in the book, such as

telling new librarians to remain current by attending conferences, courses and other professional activities, without recognizing the increasing lack of support for any kind of professional development.

The Clinical Medical Librarian's Handbook is an interesting work, and with some reservations, I can recommend it. It is a great collection of articles which specifically detail how a clinical medical librarian program can be set up, but the narrow focus of the works, only representing the large urban academic medical centre, ultimately means that this book is not as broadly applicable as it could have been. Additionally, the book was not nearly as practical as the title led me to expect, and a reorder of the chapters could have made the information within more effective.

Statement of Competing Interests

No competing interests declared.

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