NEED FOR HEALTH SCIENCE INFORMATION NETWORK IN BANGLADESH

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Better medical services and research call for accurate and prompt supply of relevant information and literature. For procurement of appropriate materials and effective dissemination, libraries are indispensable. In order to make the services available throughout the country, good bio-medical libraries have to be developed. Library services available in Bangladesh are poor. Cooperation among libraries and building up a nationwide health information network can ease the problem.

INTRODUCTION

Obviously better medical libraries can initiate and render better services. Researchers in the field of medicine not only need accurate but prompt supply of relevant information and literature both local and foreign. Efficient organisation of library services is a prerequisite for speedy procurement of such information and materials. In this context cooperation among the bio-medical libraries in Bangladesh and organising them into a network to improve the library services is essential.

INFORMATION EXPLOSION

This is the age of "publication explosion". Everyday billions and billions of publications are coming out containing incalculable information resulting in "information explosion". Information is taken to mean timely and specific knowledge acquired or derived. These information are essential for research and progress in any field. The world has shrunk and the destinies of all of us are interlocked; no single event or action is without international import. This phenomenon of the interdependence of nations is largely due to the rapid development of modern electronic communication systems and also the facility of distribution of the printed document.

Books have undergone many changes in distribution and format allowing increased extension of more and more books to more and more people, including scientists and specialists, than ever before and at a faster rate.

Information, both conventional and non-conventional are generated at a faster rate than at any previous time in the history of mankind, science and technology have advanced in supersonic speed. So, it has become a problem for librarians, documentalists and information scientists to know what information are being incorporated in books, periodicals, monographs, etc. throughout the world and what has been discovered in any particular field of knowledge. Librarians have been trying to control these information bibliographically and storing them in the computerised system to ensure their best use by research personnel, scientists and others.

MEDICAL LIBRARIES

A Medical library is a workshop for the persons engaged in medical profession and, no medical scientist and researcher can work and make any test or experiment without a resourceful and well-equipped library or information centre at hand. The science of medicine itself, now-a-days, is advancing so rapidly over so wide a front that communication between specialists is becoming increasingly difficult. Information is a universal commodity and it tends to disregard the geographical and administrative boundaries and restrictions. In order to collect accurate and desired information, sophisticated techniques and equipment are required. To procure, process, preserve and disseminate every bit of information, a library is a prime need for every medical institution. The library is the nervous system of the medical service, hence, it must be well organised, so
that the medical scientists and research workers can be posted with latest developments in their fields.

MEDICAL LIBRARY SITUATION OF BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is a developing country of the Third World, so, for her proper development it is high time to adopt a new philosophy and bring in a change in attitude towards medical libraries and librarians. In the interest of better and efficient medical service a network of co-ordinated and integrated medical libraries has to be created and developed without any further delay. According to a recent survey most of the bio-medical libraries do not have adequate, resources and professional staff, services are also very poor; Still, there are libraries which are trying to serve their clientele in spite of so many handicaps. These libraries, in order to keep the prestige of the profession, are serving the research workers and medical scientists in their day-to-day information need so that they do not feel frustrated. Since the libraries in Bangladesh are mostly located in urban areas and mainly in the capital city of Dacca, doctors and paraprofessional personnel working in the periphery are practically not being served by these libraries. Due to bad communication system, libraries in the districts cannot maintain close link with other libraries. Hospital and medical libraries are not at all well-planned. They lack funds, staff, material, equipment, space and do not even have separate budget provisions.

The number of bio-medical libraries are also inadequate and too bizarre in many respects and only a few of them contain reliable, relevant and up-to-date material: and are able to render some services such as, literature search, current awareness, bibliography, selective dissemination of information, etc, to the users. Planners and administrators have been overlooking the problems of medical libraries, as a result qualified librarians are not joining these libraries.

The following three types of problems need be specially mentioned here. They are:

a) the physical crisis resulting from the sheer bulk of the various types of educational material;

b) The operational crisis arising from the lack of adequate professional personnel time required to process each item and the resultant cost, and

c) The intellectual crisis resulting from the enormously complicated structure of the medical information which makes the retrieval of a particular piece of information a slow and costly affair.

There is no denying the fact that no single medical library or health information centre can expect to acquire all the world's medical literature even on a particular specialisation or even a significant part of it without tremendous financial and manpower resources. The problem can only be overcome by introducing a national information network with the libraries of the country. In order to initiate such a programme of collaboration a National Medical Library and Health Information Centre was set-up in Dacca in the year 1975 with financial assistance from the Asia Foundation. It is responsible to maintain contacts with the international information centres for latest information in the fields; to produce relevant audio-visual teaching aids to cater to the needs of the local libraries; to train unskilled workers of the medical libraries; to start interlending of library materials; to initiate exchange of duplicate medical literature between the libraries to help build necessary collections; to compile union catalogue of periodicals, etc.

CONCLUSION

In order to implement government's policy, medical administrators and planners should establish new libraries and develop existing bio-medical libraries and information centre so that medical professionals and others engaged in the field of medicine and its related branches can quickly obtain new knowledge, failing which total health care of the people will suffer.

To make World Health Organisation's endeavour 'Health for all by the year 2000' a success, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh have chalked out an elaborate programme to set-up more hospitals and medical centres throughout the country to make basic medical care services available at the grass root level.

REFERENCES


