

Sound Selection: podcasts prove positive

One of the contemporary challenges for clinical libraries is to understand and engage with a continuously changing variety of content packaging. The environment is rapidly changing from one where the availability of the content dictated the mode of access, to one in which clients can choose their preferred mode of access and expect that the content they need will be available to fit it.

In an effort to adapt to this change the Toowoomba Clinical Library Service observed the ubiquity of iPods and MP3 players was accompanied by a steady increase in the production and availability of audio presentations suitable for practising clinicians. At the same time, suitable indexing and aggregation of podcasts was rare, meaning much of this potentially highly useful content was difficult to discover and was little used. This issue was addressed by establishing a project whereby podcasts were collected and access provided.

This project identified (through extensive searching) suitable podcasts and pre-loaded them, as topical collections, onto iPods which were made available for loan. In addition, a database was developed to generate descriptive lists of available podcasts and to facilitate the tracking of podcast allocation to individual iPods. Over time, feedback helped us realise the collection, indexing and multimodal distribution of the podcasts was more important than simply the provision of iPods. Subsequent enhancements have been made to encompass these larger goals.

This project has been well worthwhile. Use among local clinicians has steadily grown, while hospital libraries in Brisbane and Adelaide are now collaborating with the project. Formal and informal evaluation indicates it is clearly meeting a need by extending the provision of high quality and relevant information in a format which is flexible and appropriate for clinicians thinly stretched for time and intellectual energy. Enhancing the project will involve working on better ways to evaluate the outcomes achieved from this service and the impacts on practitioner behaviour and patient outcomes.

Authors: Daniel McDonald; Roger Hawcroft
Email: Daniel_McDonald@health.qld.gov.au
Address: Toowoomba Clinical Library Service

Queensland Health
PMB 2, Pechey Street
Toowoomba QLD 4350

Phone: 07 46165563

Fax: 07 46998844