

Utilization of the internet by physicians in Israel for medical purposes \ Galit Sne

Abstract:

The subject of this thesis came about after frequent visits to a hospital and observing the nature of doctors' work, from the constant admission and discharge of patients and the lack to treatment time on one hand, to proficiency in the field on the other.

There is a constant wonder: with the vast developments in medical science over the past decade, are the medical services in Israel making use of the information available online, and if so – how is time divided between doctors' intense work schedule and their ability to catch up on patients' conditions, new treatments, and the availability and location of other specialists; and do doctors in Israel follow up on new information or questions regarding patients' conditions regularly?

As a patient, most of the answers were derived from numerous available websites, which are flooded with relevant information, an endless list of official websites, personal web pages, articles, forums etc. But is this a patient's job? And is the information, which is usually written in a professional – and sometimes foreign – language, truly available to all patients?

The search for studies or articles on this subject in Israel yielded very few results – outdated articles and sporadic reviews in professional blogs – which barely scratched the surface; making it impossible to accurately assess the percentage of doctors who use online databases for medical reasons.

Collecting the literary reviews derived mostly from articles and studies conducted abroad.



Email addresses of doctors, as listed on hospital websites in Israel, were collected and questionnaires were sent to doctors from 10 hospitals in Israel. Out of the 400 questionnaires that were sent, some 200 were returned and 132 were found in order and included in the result analysis. I would like to note the doctors' positive response and willingness to assist by filling out the questionnaires, which contradicted the concern that answers would be hard to come by, when the group surveyed is comprised of physicians.

The goal was to see how often doctors in Israel use online information, how they use it, difficulties and obstacles, preferred information tools, evaluation and regulation of the various information tools, etc.

The findings indicated a frequent use of information sources, in a manner similar to worldwide trends. Various studies note the occasional preference of one source of information over others, but generally, the percentage and manner of use are identical in Israel and the world.

The study also made several important findings that required additional explanation of the results, other than the questioned presented and answered. The most prominent finding was the doctors' reluctance to use a librarian/ information managers to find information, neither as an integral part of the medical team's work nor as a way of saving time.

The difficulties the findings presented were in understanding the organizational culture, and why the understanding and recognition of an information specialist as a contributing part of the team differs from that of the rest of the world. Many articles worldwide stress the meaningful role a medical librarian plays, how important he is to the work of the medical team, how he can bolster a doctor's ability by searching for information, and how he serves as a pivotal part of doctors' advanced studies; on top of their delegation of authority on matters of researching medical information to the medical librarian.



Another important finding was one suggesting doctors disagree with the fact that lack of time poses a true difficulty. Again, worldwide studies name this difficulty as one of the most significant obstacles in searching for information; but in Israel – where there is a significant shortage in manpower and doctors are often overworked to the point of exhaustion – it was found that only one-third of those polled agreed that lack of time poses a difficulty.

What is the reason, then, for these findings?

We also found that conferring with colleagues is no longer as significant as it once was. This manner of information sharing is virtually nonexistent.

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