

The Hospital Library In Portugal: The Vision Of Librarians

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work was to identify the professional perspective of librarians and hospital libraries in Portugal and their future projection. This is a descriptive study, through non-experimental research, based on a qualitative analysis method. For this study, a sample of 13 professionals was used who, in some way, have a connection/knowledge with the work carried out in hospital libraries. The aim was to have a sample that covered the country from north to south so that the results could be representative of the Portuguese reality. The results indicate that professionals working in health libraries in Portugal consider that there is no specific professional training for this field with very particular characteristics compared to other library realities. Furthermore, they believe that health professionals who work in libraries should be integrated into the clinical and research teams of their institutions. On the other hand, given the importance of evidence-based medicine today, it is necessary to develop new roles that librarians must assume. They also consider that it is up to the health librarian to take on the challenges, invest in the continuous updating and acquisition of skills, strengthen their role in the institutions in which they are inserted, and thus justify the added value of the profession.

Keywords: Hospital libraries; medical libraries; library services; librarians; Portugal

INTRODUCTION

A medical library in a hospital is a necessity. Like the doctor, it must always be prepared to respond to its users' emergencies. The library should be a quiet place in the midst of intense activity, where health professionals can enjoy a few moments of tranquility and adequate working conditions, in which the library and its professionals have a close relationship with the environment. It must also be a work and research environment where practice and theory are defined in a close relationship. This relationship has added value for the doctor beyond the estimation itself, since currently the acquisition of knowledge occurs mainly from printed and digital resources and not through experimental learning. ¹

Thus, a hospital library plays a fundamental role in locating the external information necessary for its healthcare, teaching and research activities. ²) The library facilitates access to retrospective information available in databases and other resources, but it also offers, or can offer, prospective services (information alert, training to make better use of available resources, etc.). ³

However, according to *McKeown* ⁴) and *Muñoz et al.*, ³) there is evidence about the value and impact of these services in health units, but professionals from these institutions do not always go to the library in search of specialized support. According to *Lawton* , ⁵) there is a perception that, for health professionals, the role of hospital librarians is unclear and that evidence needs to be created to demonstrate the value and impact of these professionals in service delivery. clinical.

The problem of the growing production of scientific publications is a reality. The library's goal has been to help users learn about what is being published in their area of interest and reduce the volume of research and reading. More than storing and preserving information, it is important to disseminate it, provide knowledge to

the user and make them aware of the right to be informed. One way to solve the problem is the creation of more specialized libraries, capable of managing a delimited field and of collecting, archiving and distributing this same literature. In addition, health institutions must provide the necessary resources for hospital libraries to manage information, ensure maximum quality in the services they provide, and contribute to satisfying the needs of their users. ⁶⁾ Therefore, rapid changes in the delivery of patient care, support for hospital services and the consolidation of greater health care should be part of the concerns of the health care librarian. ⁷

The maintenance of many hospital libraries, in a context of uncertainty, can only be achieved if librarians provide specific skills that promote best practices and increase confidence in the services they provide to users. *Sievert et al* ⁸ conducted research that demonstrated the value of utilizing library services for health care providers in Midwestern communities. *Zipperer & Sykes* ⁹ described the benefits of librarians' role as collaborative partners in patient safety.

A specialized health library should support patient and community health care through evidence-based knowledge. Its resources and services must support clinical decision making, contribution to public health programs, education and training, health technology assessment, research, management and administration. ¹⁰

There is no consensus among the different authors about the role of the librarian as a professional in the hospital library. There are opinions ranging from the role of reference librarian to the integration of the librarian as a member of the medical team. ¹¹ However, the consensus is unanimous when it is stated that the activity of this professional goes far beyond the functions of a mere researcher. ^{12, 13}

Knowing the hospital library user in depth is crucial when it comes to offering useful and quality services. *Antunes* ¹⁴ and *Marshall* ¹⁵ conclude that health professionals are in a permanent research process. At the same time, clinical practice also implies a constant updating of knowledge.

The hospital library remains a little-known model in Portugal, despite its importance for the functioning of health institutions and for research in the field of health sciences. This is an area that, until now, has been little studied at the national level and is only specifically known by health professionals linked to teaching and research. Many libraries have become true educational centers with immediate availability of access to knowledge. Digital resources are revolutionizing the field of information sciences and allow health professionals to update; They provide information to students and health technicians who support scientific research and to those responsible for the institutions in decision-making; They stand in solidarity with doctors in the new challenge of caring for an increasingly aware and informed population, but who, at the same time, have no guarantee of the credibility of the information they can access so easily. It is important to deepen our knowledge of these libraries and the role they play, as well as understand the reasons that make their effectiveness unfeasible in the institutions that host them. That is why it seems obvious to delve deeper into the opinion of librarians who know this reality and who, despite their weaknesses, are working to improve the quality of service in this type of library.

In this study, the following questions are raised: a) what are the perceptions of hospital library professionals in Portugal; b) what competencies are perceived as necessary for the integration of the hospital librarian into multidisciplinary clinical teams; and c) what is the vision that professionals have about the future of the

hospital library. The objective of this work was to identify the professional perspective of librarians and hospital libraries in Portugal and their future projection.

METHODS

13 people participated in the online survey, all of them women between 38 and 63 years old with an average age of 47.2 years. At the level of academic training, 6 have degrees (46.2%), 5 have diplomas (38.46%) and 2 have technical professional training (15.38%) in different specialties. Gender was not considered *a priori*; We simply sought to find a group of professionals with knowledge of health libraries. Regarding the professional experience of the participants, 6 hold a director or coordinator position, 2 are senior technicians (15.4%), 4 are technicians (30.7%) and one of them heads a professional association. Regarding years of service, the average is 20.2; 8 are over 20 years old (61.5%); and 5 less than 20 (38.5%). Regarding years of service in the hospital library, the average is 11.3: 7 with more than 15 years of service (53.8%); and 5 with less than 10 (38.4%). The geographical distribution of the sample covers professionals from all over the country.

Procedures

The study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with health information professionals, and had the objectives: a) determine the competencies perceived as necessary by the hospital librarian to integrate into multidisciplinary clinical teams; b) determine the vision that hospital library professionals have of their mission and tasks; c) know the opinion that health information professionals have about evidence-based medicine; d) know what the opinion of professionals is about the future of hospital libraries.

Data compilation was carried out between March and October 2017. Each professional who participated in the interview was contacted individually. Although the interview included sociodemographic data, anonymity, confidentiality, and participation were guaranteed voluntarily. The interview was constructed from an extensive review of the literature, ⁴, ⁶) consultations with experts and pilot tests. It should be noted that these consultations led to a structural reformulation of the interview, but not the content. An opinion was requested for the conduct of the study from the Ethics Committee of the Local Health Unit of Guarda, and a favorable opinion was obtained. This Local Health Unit, located in central Portugal, is made up of two hospitals and more than a dozen primary health care centers.

Instrument

As a research technique, an interview was constructed to be applied to a group of 13 professionals who work in libraries and who, in some way, have a connection/knowledge with the work carried out in hospital libraries. It was also sought to have a sample that geographically covered the entire country so that the results could be representative of the Portuguese reality. The instrument created to carry out the study was an interview designed with the objective of obtaining responses from professionals who manage and develop their professional activity in Portuguese health sciences libraries or through practice in professional associations of librarians in Portugal.

The semi-structured interview consisted of answering seven questions, both open and closed. In the first part, sociodemographic questions were included, such as age, academic training, job position, and years of service. In the second part, the seven questions indicated below were asked:

1. How long have you been working as a professional in a hospital library?
2. Do you consider that the current training of hospital librarians in Portugal is adequate for the needs of users and institutions?
3. Do you consider the integration of the hospital librarian as an active member of the multidisciplinary clinical team pertinent?
4. Do you consider that the practice of evidence-based medicine is a reality in Portuguese hospitals?
5. How do you see the role of the hospital librarian in research teams?
6. The acquisition of material goods is a problem inherent to practically all hospital libraries. What are your suggestions to solve this problem?
7. Do you think that the hospital library scenario has changed in the last 10 years?

Data analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed. The coding process sought to identify the relationships of the interviewees with the themes. For this, a descriptive content analysis was carried out, which for Yin ¹⁶ “has the purpose of listing or describing the characteristics of the phenomena.” In the first phase, the interviews were transcribed and processed in *NVivo* (QSR *NVivo* Version 7.0), then an exploratory reading of all the interviews was done, and finally all the data were analyzed, coded and categorized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The content analysis of the 13 interviews revealed a series of recurring themes or categories. In total, the number of sources of information was 13 (each interviewee corresponds to one source) and the number of dimensions or categories of content analysis were 3 ([table](#)), with a total of 64 references ($N = 64$):



1. Perception of the work of the hospital librarian as a professional.
2. Valuation of the hospital librarian as a professional.
3. Perception of the hospital library.

Table Dimensions, categories, subcategories, indicators and references (n)

Dimensiones/categorías (referencias)	Subcategorías	Indicadores
1 - Percepción sobre el bibliotecario como profesional (n= 18)	1.1 - Experiencia profesional como bibliotecario en una biblioteca de hospital	La experiencia profesional es determinante en la evaluación del desempeño del bibliotecario de hospital; diferencias en el desempeño profesional del bibliotecario en una biblioteca especializada y no especializada.
	1.2 - Conocimiento sobre el contenido de la formación académica de los bibliotecarios de hospital	Conocimiento de la formación académica actual.
	1.3 - Formación del bibliotecario de hospital adecuada a las necesidades de los usuarios	Conocimiento de las necesidades de los usuarios.
	1.4 - Formación del bibliotecario de hospital adecuada a las necesidades de la institución	Conocimiento de las necesidades de la institución.
2 - Valorización del bibliotecario escolar como profesional (n= 19)	2.1 - El bibliotecario de hospital como miembro de un equipo clínico multidisciplinar	Saber si en Portugal existen equipos clínicos multidisciplinares; la importancia del bibliotecario de hospital como miembro de un equipo clínico multidisciplinar.
	2.2 - Contenido funcional del bibliotecario de hospital como parte del equipo clínico multidisciplinar	Conocimiento del contenido funcional del bibliotecario de hospital como parte del equipo clínico multidisciplinar; formación del bibliotecario de hospital adecuado a las funciones desempeñadas por un equipo clínico multidisciplinar.
	2.3 - El bibliotecario de hospital como miembro de un equipo de investigación	Saber si en Portugal existen bibliotecarios de hospital que formen parte de un equipo de investigación; importancia del bibliotecario de hospital como miembro de un equipo de investigación.
	2.4 - El contenido funcional del bibliotecario como miembro de un equipo de investigación	Conocimiento del contenido funcional del bibliotecario como miembro de un equipo de investigación; formación del bibliotecario de hospital adecuada a las funciones desempeñadas por un equipo de investigación.
3 - Percepción de la biblioteca de hospital (n= 27)	3.1 - La práctica de la medicina basada en la evidencia	Conocimiento sobre la práctica de la medicina basada en la evidencia; conocer si la práctica de la medicina basada en la evidencia es una realidad en Portugal; conocimiento de las funciones desempeñadas por el bibliotecario en la práctica de la medicina basada en la evidencia.
	3.2 - Los recursos de la biblioteca de hospital.	Conocimiento de los recursos de la biblioteca de hospital; gestión de los recursos de la biblioteca de hospital; estrategias para las políticas de gestión de costes.
	3.3 - El presente y el futuro de la biblioteca de hospital.	Conocimiento de los cambios acontecidos en la biblioteca de hospital en los últimos 10 años; anticipación a los cambios en la biblioteca de hospital del futuro; Propuestas de mejora para la biblioteca de hospital.

An analysis of the results was carried out taking into account, on the one hand, the frequency of the indicators, and on the other hand, the construction of categories and subcategories based on the characteristics of the indicators, which are as follows: ¹⁷

1. Perception of the work of the hospital librarian as a professional.
1. It was considered that professional experience in health sciences libraries, especially hospital ones, could be an important aspect to answer the questions posed in the interview. This permissiveness is correct because although there are singularities in the professional performance of a librarian in a hospital library, according to the opinion of those interviewed, it is only the professional experience that makes the difference between the performance of a librarian in a specialized hospital library and a librarian who performs functions in a non-specialized library.
 - In the opinion of those interviewed, the skills of a librarian in health matters are acquired through professional experience and through continuous training. In many cases, professionals do not have the support of their superiors to develop new projects. There are persistent and creative librarians who invest in their training to promote more efficient service. However, there are also clinical librarians who lack the initiative necessary to change unfavorable situations for their library. The professionals interviewed also believe that it is necessary to demonstrate that the service provided by a librarian cannot be

replaced by another unqualified professional, a recurring situation in many institutions.

2. The question arises whether the training of a hospital librarian is adequate for the needs of institutions and users. However, the majority of respondents are aware of the academic training provided and consider that it is not adequate, a situation that is aggravated by the rapid development of new technologies and, consequently, by the rapid expiration of skills. There is a clear lack of guidelines to standardize the activity of the health information professional in Portugal. Their activity cannot be determined by the individual attitude of each librarian nor by the availability shown by hierarchical superiors. The existence of guidelines will give consistency to the principle that the service provided by a clinical librarian cannot be replaced by another unqualified professional, a situation that is repeated in many institutions.
3. User preference for the digital service model is increasing. It is the "birth" of libraries without walls, which created a virtual space parallel to the traditional library: the non-physical library. ¹⁴ Users' preference for this new reference service model is only a consequence of the advantages offered by digital services, the speed with which information can be obtained, the convenience of being able to contact the library, regardless of the distance where the researcher is located, among others. ¹⁸ Furthermore, it appears from the opinion expressed in the interviews that information technology has made it practically unnecessary for the user to physically visit the library and for the

librarian to have to meet with the user, whether for consultations, training or other activities. *Kronenfeld* ¹⁹ observed the same trend of these activities being offered “outside the library” while providing new opportunities in professional performance.

4. They believe that there should be a branch of documentary science dedicated specifically to hospital librarianship or a specialization in health. The specialized training of the "health librarian and/or clinical librarian" existing in other countries, as occurs in Northern Europe, should also exist in Portugal, since - although the training provides skills that allow the development of relevant work in access to information/knowledge - there are important gaps in the offer of specialized training in the area of health.
 - They also believe that institutions need librarians with knowledge of languages, health terminology, language indexing and descriptors in health sciences, and that technology is an important aspect of health sciences, but its development leads to rapid and outdated training.
2. Valuation of the hospital librarian as a professional.
 1. Many hospitals recognize the value of the hospital librarian in contributing to patient care from diagnosis to recovery; increases efficiency and decreases costs; minimizes the time healthcare professionals spend searching for information on appropriate diagnoses and treatments; improves patient outcomes; ensures the necessary knowledge base and provides quality digital and print resources. ³, ⁵

- The clinical librarian is a member of the multidisciplinary medical team and, as such, must always be available to provide information that improves the patient's quality of life and supports the continuing education of health professionals. ¹² It seems possible to say that the integration of the librarian into multidisciplinary teams requires greater involvement and preparation for the demonstration of its added value in a universe that reconciles the practices of science, engineering and statistics. Therefore, it is necessary for the librarian to reinvent himself and follow this trend. In countries like the United States, the hospital librarian is part of multidisciplinary teams; She follows the visit to the wards and participates in clinical meetings. ¹⁰ In Portugal, the functions of the hospital library librarian are essentially limited to the library space. ¹⁸
- 2. and 2.3 Research is another challenge, a new opportunity for health information professionals. In some countries, the librarian is part of the research team, as well as part of the clinical team. It is important to know what the Portuguese reality is, given the current importance of research in the area of health sciences and the new roles that hospital library professionals will have to assume.
- In the opinion of those interviewed, the clinical librarian is an asset to the research team. The design and analysis of clinical trials lacks information retrieval and management skills, areas in which the health librarian can excel. A holder of specific knowledge, such as systematic bibliographic research, has a

unique role in contributing to the success of research, from its conception as a bibliographic researcher to the dissemination of results, or in medical writing and editing tasks. Research and clinical practice cannot be dissociated. These practices have always been "walking" side by side over time, so it is very relevant that there is a commitment between the institutions and the hospital library. *Nogueira* ¹⁷ considers that it is productive for the librarian to know the institution's projects and be an active member in planning and management meetings; he acquires a clear knowledge of the institution's objectives and assumes well-oriented and successful performance. ¹⁸)

3. The research team must recognize this contribution and not see it as an adversary, but rather as a collaborative partner, since a multidisciplinary team is by definition a set of people organized to achieve a common objective, in which each one contributes their own experience. . In the continuity of this definition, the librarian must maintain the specificity of his task, the treatment and availability of information, because this will be what will make the difference and allow better results to be achieved. In this way, a clinical librarian must be able to demonstrate their skills to research teams, and get involved in studies, disseminate information and anticipate the needs of accurate and current scientific literature at the level of scientific production and repositories. scientists. ¹⁹)
3. Perception of the present and future of the hospital library.

1. The practice of evidence-based medicine is a reality in many countries. Is Portugal part of this group of countries? It is pertinent to know if Portugal follows countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, among others, where this practice, as well as the integration of the hospital librarian into the multidisciplinary clinical team, is already routine. [twenty](#))
 - For those interviewed, the practice of evidence-based medicine is increasingly a reality in Portuguese hospitals and support for clinical decisions is increasingly important to achieve excellence in healthcare. But since this is not a practice in all Portuguese hospitals, some due to lack of financial resources, others due to lack of political measures, the librarian has the responsibility of creating "bridges" between doctors and those in charge of the hospital, to contribute to a growing practice.
 - Even in the opinion of those interviewed, there is no certainty about the widespread practice of evidence-based medicine, given the closure of so many hospital libraries, the accelerated process of fusion of services and the weight of the bureaucratic machinery of public and private hospitals. . Currently, evidence-based medicine is practiced by professionals who have received specific training for this purpose, who have access to sources of information and basic knowledge of information to use and evaluate them. Therefore, the practice of evidence-based medicine is considered to be a developing reality in Portugal. The lack of specific training in the country

means that librarians are only asked to obtain the material already researched. Therefore, the librarian has the task of transforming information into knowledge, reinforcing his role as an active agent in health promotion, and being the manager of one of the essential steps in the practice of evidence-based medicine: researching the best scientific evidence.

- In the experience of those interviewed, the practice of evidence-based medicine increasingly needs a solid scientific basis to support clinical decision-making. The growth of available health information and the emergence of new clinical questions that need an immediate answer, pose new challenges in the daily practice of doctors who need immediate answers: the right information, at the right time, to achieve correct diagnoses.
- The role of librarians in the practice of evidence-based medicine is crucial in bibliographic research, updating and systematizing information, creating scientific repositories, providing research platforms and bibliographic tools. The librarian provides scientifically proven, reliable and timely answers; supports the healthcare professional who does not have time to research and who has difficulty examining available information in a timely manner. Thus, the librarian is responsible for bridging the gap, transforming information into knowledge, strengthening his role as an active agent in health promotion and managing one of the essential stages of evidence-based medicine: the search for the best evidence.

scientific possible. In this way, he must cooperate in making the diagnosis through research in the scientific literature.

- In this context, it is evident that the evolution of medical practices has contributed to a change in library practices. The support provided by the librarian in indicating credible information resources, adapted to each particular situation, is of great importance in the patient education process. [twenty-one](#))
- The performance of the clinical librarian goes far beyond carrying out quick searches for information. She plays an active role within the team and uses her contextual knowledge to help answer clinical questions, confirm a diagnosis or confirm a treatment plan. ²²) From the results of the interviews, it was found that there are librarians who do not know the functions/role they should play in the practice of evidence- based medicine. However, most of the interviewees' responses, in addition to revealing knowledge on this topic, also reveal a consolidated position on what this practice actually is and what it should be. It is known that this is a practice that is increasingly present in large Portuguese hospitals to support clinical decisions to achieve excellence in healthcare, but there is an absence of these practices in small Portuguese hospitals.
- There are several reasons why this is not yet a common practice in all Portuguese hospitals: lack of funds, lack of political will from hierarchical superiors, lack of knowledge of the benefits it will bring to all those involved and lack of specific training in

the area, a factor that leads librarians to be requested only to obtain the material already researched.

2. Quality evidence-based healthcare delivery increases the importance of library resources and validated information. Those interviewed advocate the creation of a national consortium for the health area, so that all institutions have access to the same information resources that guarantee the practice of evidence-based medicine, the continuous improvement of health care and intelligent management of financial resources. According to respondents, at the level of hospital library resource management, and given current challenges, there is a need for strong leadership and the establishment of optimal partnerships with national and local partners, including influential content providers. in decision-making regarding strategies, policies and investments.
- Let us now look at the strategies for cost containment policies and find out that the library can contribute to reducing costs by effectively supporting management with practical information at a reduced cost, reducing the costs of duplication of research efforts and , often eliminating the need for research outside the company/institution. There is also evidence that financial investment in libraries and library services has important benefits related to saving valuable time and optimizing the quality of patient care. ³⁾
 - Regarding the financing issues that periodically have to be faced in the hospital library, we can consider it a crucial and

worrying aspect, since it is essential to look for strategies when budget cuts are at the forefront, whenever it is necessary to assume containment policies. .

- The interviewees are unanimous on this issue. The State and the hierarchical superiors of the institutions are responsible for defining policies that value libraries in social, cultural and scientific aspects and for investing in a general manner; and more specifically, in the acquisition/renewal of publications. The importance of having a good collection (digital or paper) is decisive in a library, whose users are at the forefront of knowledge.
- This can be considered an ethical issue, urgently needed, whose solution would be the creation of a national health consortium for the acquisition of resources and which would have the necessary requirements to guarantee equal access to information for all institutions in the country. In the same way, it would be a guarantee that the practice of evidence-based medicine had the necessary resources to become a reality and, consequently, influenced the continuous improvement of health care and the intelligent management of financial resources.
- Interviewees suggested other alternatives, such as regional partnerships between institutions to share subscriptions to publications and databases; greater cooperation between libraries to share resources, including university libraries; financial autonomy, with funds from, for example,

clinical trials, sponsorship, applications, among others, which would allow libraries to directly acquire resources.

3. Knowing what has changed, or if anything has changed, in the last 10 years and trying to anticipate the near future can help develop proposals to improve the performance of the hospital library. From the point of view of the professionals interviewed, the hospital library environment is very different from that of 10 years ago, especially in university hospitals, although it is clear that there is underinvestment in this service both in terms of budget and human resources. because much of the information is currently accessible through the Internet, and because the extraordinary skills of the librarian are unknown and, therefore, not valued. Every day, in-person users are fewer and they no longer consult paper resources, as they prefer the PC or their tablet. However, there is a significant increase in requests via the Internet (institutional messaging or email) and everything is urgent (the patient cannot wait and the studies have a delivery time).
- They also mention that the great change in the hospital library in the last 10 years responded to the appearance of the digital format and the increase in the number of scientific publications, as well as the change in the services provided. In addition to maintaining traditional services, the hospital library is increasingly distant from its physical space and thus meets the needs of users. We have gone from a lack of information to an excess of information. Today, the greatest difficulty is understanding what information is really important, critically

evaluating available resources, and helping users locate the best scientific evidence: knowledge over information.

- In fact, current legislation in Portugal does not require there to be a library in hospitals; and when it exists, these teams are very small. Librarians who work in these libraries are called "lone librarians" and there are great difficulties in integrating projects, teams and work groups.
- Information professionals must enhance and better communicate what they know and do best, demonstrate their abilities to locate the most relevant and appropriate information, and teach health professionals how to locate, evaluate and use information in an ethical and responsible. They should teach how to work with *rankings* , what an impact factor is and how it is defined, what quartiles are and how they are constructed, what alternative metrics are, how to combine the scientific impact with the social impact of scientific publications, what they are predatory journals, how to recognize them, what open access is, why you have to pay to publish in open access, and how to approach this issue in light of the editorial policies of commercial entities.
- For the librarians interviewed, the future trend is the worsening of the world situation. Professionals must meet, work as a team, cooperate with other colleagues, associate between professionals and between institutions, and join professional associations to strengthen themselves, promote themselves as

professionals, demonstrate the importance of their role, their profession and how they can actively contribute to the institution. In the next 5 years, many hospitals may close their libraries or stop having librarians. No positive changes are expected in the next few years, and within 5 years. At the will of some, the hospital library would cease to exist. So there is a state of uncertainty about the future.

- Finally, they considered that in the next 5 years there will be important changes. It is expected that progress will be made towards the contraction of clinical decision support resources at the national level (in the short or medium term). Regardless of the future, it is up to the health librarian to take on the challenges, invest in constant updating and acquisition of skills, strengthen their role in the institutions in which they are inserted, and justify greater integration into medical and research teams.
- Today and in the future, our services must not only be flexible, active and timely, but must also transform information services into critical tools for decision-making, innovation and research. Information will increasingly become part of healthcare and our ability to access, understand and interpret it will be crucial both at the level of the profession and within the national healthcare system itself.

Conclusions

The library can take a proactive role in the hospital organization; anticipate the information demands of their professionals and develop information tools and resources. The study highlights three categories for good knowledge and functioning of the hospital library in Portugal: perception of the work of the hospital librarian as a professional, appreciation of the hospital librarian as a professional, and current and future perception of the hospital library. For this, a detailed description of each of the categories analyzed was obtained, depending on each source, among which some of the topics most mentioned by librarians stand out, which are crucial for a perspective of change:

- The training that is currently officially provided is not the most appropriate for a health librarian. There should be specialized training for the "health librarian and/or clinical librarian," a branch of documentary science dedicated specifically to hospital librarianship or a health specialization.
- When the health unit has this service, the teams are very small. In this way, "lone librarians" (isolated librarians) have great difficulties in promoting dissemination and promotion initiatives, integrating projects and developing greater activity between users and institutions.
- The practice of evidence-based medicine is an unusual reality in Portugal and the extraordinary skills of the librarian who contribute and promote best practices and increase confidence in the services they provide to patients are unknown and therefore not valued. users.
- The role of librarians in the practice of evidence-based medicine is crucial in bibliographic research, updating and systematizing information, creating scientific repositories, providing research platforms and bibliographic tools that provide security. necessary so that health professionals can practice

more effective medicine. It should also be your responsibility to contribute to the good image of the hospital among the academic community and the community in general; provide information to patients and their families; participate in the placement of community support services, as well as identify and provide quality information from any source (print or electronic).

Professionals must come together, work as a team, cooperate with other colleagues, associate among professionals and between institutions, and join professional associations to strengthen themselves, promote themselves as professionals, demonstrate the importance of their role, their profession and how they can actively contribute to the institution. .

- The hospital library must also carry out its activities in accordance with the objectives of the responsible institution. It is essential to have a strategy based on a good relationship with the organization itself and speak the company's language to contribute to its success.
- It will be important to introduce a quality system in service routines that allows the adaptation of improvements to real needs. Evaluation is important. It is essential to know the weaknesses of the service, measure the impact of activities, understand user satisfaction and evaluate the cost- benefit relationship.
- In the cost-benefit relationship, future trends will be the abandonment of the acquisition of resources at the local level so that they can be contracted centrally by a national entity. The creation of a national consortium will be the means to make better contracts with publishers and suppliers, and the fair way for all institutions to have access to the same information resources.

- Research is another challenge, a new opportunity for health information professionals. It is precisely in the area of research support where the hospital librarian will join the work teams as a crucial element in the research, review and updating of information, as a bibliographic researcher in the design and analysis of clinical studies, to contribute his skills in systematic literature review and as a medical writer and editor in supporting the writing of scientific articles.
- Although it is clear that the hospital library environment is very different from that of 10 years ago, especially in university hospitals, legislation still does not require its existence in hospitals, which means that many health institutions do not have a library.
- The opinion of all those involved in hospital libraries is unanimous when it is stated that the State and the hierarchical superiors of the institutions are responsible for the investment and definition of policies that value the important role of libraries as guarantors of equal access to information.

Finally, it is important to consider the relevance and relevance of the present study for the redefinition and evaluation of the importance of hospital libraries in Portugal, the dynamics of health units and the improvement of decision-making processes in the environment. hospital, as well as raising awareness for the construction of a network of hospital libraries, associated with a policy of valuing its professionals

This study highlights the need for more research on the perception of the work of hospital librarians, with studies on other centers, in a way that makes possible geographical comparison and the implementation of management strategies, differentiators in each hospital library. It is suggested that future research be

carried out on this topic with a mixed perspective, both qualitative and quantitative, using, for example, an interview focused on the librarian's experience that also uses other quantitative evaluation methodologies, such as self-efficacy scales, climate organizational and health literacy, among others.

This complex and uncertain panorama is part of a transition stage in which it is necessary to reaffirm the need to delve deeper into this topic, highlighting the added value that library services professionals provide in hospitals and health units, both from the from an intellectual point of view as well as from an economic and management perspective.

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