



Evidence Summary

Information Rx Program Requires More Promotion, More Support and Some Adjustment

A Review of:

Meeks, K. (2009). Information Rx: Promotion and utilization by Georgia librarians and the Georgia American College of Physicians. *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet*, 13, 129-134.

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Received: 31 Aug. 2010

Accepted: 16 Oct. 2010

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Abstract

Objective – To determine the level of awareness of the Information Rx program by Georgia librarians and Georgia American College of Physicians (GACP) members, and the use of Information Rx pads, with which physicians would “prescribe” information for their patients.

Design – Descriptive (surveys and interviews).

Setting – Georgia, U.S. Surveys were distributed and responded to online. The face-to-face interview locations were not specified.

Subjects – One survey, which was provided to the Georgia American College of Physicians (GACP) membership including internal medicine physicians and medical students

interested in internal medicine, had 46 respondents. The second survey was sent to librarians who were members of the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) and the Georgia Health Sciences Library Association (GHSLA). There were 72 public librarians, 14 hospital librarians and 13 academic medical librarians who responded (as well as 6 not specified in the article). A select group of four medical librarians was chosen for more in-depth interviews. The number of surveys sent out was not provided.

Methods – Two online surveys, one for physicians and one for librarians, were administered. No information concerning response rate was provided. Face-to-face interviews with four academic medical librarians were conducted. No further information about the interviewing process was provided such as who conducted the

interviews, methods used to ensure objectivity or consistency, or where the interviews were conducted.

Main Results – Out of 46 GACP survey respondents, only 4 were familiar with the Information Rx program and only 2 of those had used the information Rx pads, neither of whom had referred anyone to a library for further assistance. The two who had not used the pads were either too busy or didn't understand the program well enough. Of 105 librarian survey respondents, 46 had heard of Information Rx, 37 had received Information Rx promotional materials, and 12 reported helping patrons look for information on MedlinePlus "prescribed" to them by their doctors. Responses to the open-ended interview questions given to the four interviewed librarians were mixed regarding receipt of program materials, negative regarding the effectiveness of the program, and reported no awareness of any patrons having been helped with information "prescriptions." To improve the program's success, the author suggested steps such as providing promotional information on the MedlinePlus site, better integration between MedlinePlus and Information Rx, involving librarians somehow in the process as a whole given their ability to help users navigate and understand MedlinePlus, and marketed more to nurses given their front-line responsibilities.

Conclusion – Although the program is somewhat useful, Information Rx has not been promoted or supported sufficiently. Information needs to be linked on the MedlinePlus website, clarification of the program and that it is available at no charge should be emphasized. Librarians should be involved and the target audience may need to be changed to include nurses.

Commentary

The results of this study would be of obvious interest to those behind the Information Rx program and to any health librarians aware of the program, especially those in the Georgia

area. The results would be of general interest to any librarian supporting projects requiring physician participation in that it can be seen as a negative case study of such participation. The general conclusion that knowledge and understanding of the Information Rx program is not sufficiently widespread and that more promotion and education is necessary is rather clear but also not surprising. Additional analysis and discussion should have been included to more firmly connect the results with the conclusion and recommendation. More detailed conclusions and specific recommendations could have been provided.

The author should have provided additional information on the program itself and other tools involved. For example, the article mentioned that "physicians that participated in this project were provided Information Rx tools, such as 'information Rx pads'" but no other tools were described. Were there other tools? If so, what were they? What did the program involve beyond the provision of the pads? A copy of the pads themselves was not included and no description given other than that they were to be used to "prescribe" information solutions to patients. According to an article referenced in this paper (Siegal, Logan, Harnsberger et al. 2006), the pads are very simple and are apparently the central part of the program but this is not clear from the article. One other article (Adams & de Bont, 2007) appears to refer to this program (although not by name, despite the use of the phrase "Information Rx" in the title) but provides no more information than Siegal and colleagues (2006) or the current one.

The use of surveys and interviews were certainly an appropriate choice for type study given the stated objectives. No other work identified on the subject of Information Rx looked at the program from such a pragmatic vantage point and level of detail.

Unfortunately, copies of the two surveys conducted were not included. Some survey questions and answers are discussed but it is not clear if what is mentioned is the entire survey content. On the other hand, the questions and responses from the four in-

depth interviews conducted were included in the article word for word. The focus on the responses of 4 interviewed subjects and not on the 151 survey respondents seems unbalanced.

A few details which were missing in the description of the study would have enhanced the reader's understanding. Because the article does not identify how many individuals received the study, the rate of response is unknown. In the description of the GACP survey respondents, one was missing. The author states that there were "46 respondents to the GACP members' survey" and that "41 were not familiar with Information Rx." The author then discusses the "four respondents who were familiar with the program." Finally, there is no mention of how the four individuals in the "select group of medical librarians" were chosen. These are minor details in the study but including them would have been appropriate and important for the reader's opinion of the worth of the study.

References

- Adams, S. & de Bont, A. (2007). Information Rx: Prescribing good consumerism and responsible citizenship. *Health Care Analysis*, 15(4), 273-290.
- Siegel, E. R., Logan, R. A., Harnsberger, R. L., Craverdi, K., Krause, J. A., Lyon, B., Hajarjian, K., Uhl, J., Ruffin, A., & Lindbergm, D. A. B. (2006). Information Rx: Evaluation of a new informatics tool for physicians, patients, and libraries. *Information Services and Use*, 26(1), 1-10.