The Eight Principles of Medical Librarians in the Health Systems

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The access to health information for all people is the fundamental goal of the World Health Organization (WHO). It comes true when both health professionals and patients as beneficiaries have access to health information. Medical librarians play an important role in facilitating access to health information, and this role should be in the context and framework of scientific principles. The principles were first proposed by Thompson and Ranganathan and it was revised over time by scholars like Das (1), Gopinath, Holt, Gorman and Fadaie (2). The common feature of all these revisions is limited to activities of librarians to the library. But today, the activity scope of medical librarians is not only libraries but also they play a role in the scientometric centers, knowledge base centers, journals, publishing centers, and research centers (3) which are called Health Information Centers (HIC). In this article, we aimed to review and revise these principles according to new realm of medical librarians.

First principle: providing health information needs of users

Identification and provision of health information needs of users (staff, students, professors, patients and their families) is the most important principle of Library and Information Science (LIS). Kraford said, " necessity of decision making, people's occupational hierarchy, the need to search for new idea, professional contribution, interests and occupational activities and meeting the needs related to disease are the most important factors in the rise of information needs. Medical librarians should try to meet health information needs of the users with their knowledge and professionalism; and provide valid information resources, facilities and equipment in different formats.

Second principle: Facilitate the users' access to health information

Facilitate the users' access to health information is effective in promoting public health (4). This principle is more important due to the growing use of electronic resources. Thus, medical librarians in addition to provision of traditional and electronic resources should provide access to electronic resources from different locations for users. Also, to make better use of this resource, they should manage their information resources and train the users. Moreover, while removing barriers to access to information, they should step toward fulfillng the motto of the WHO "access to health information for all people".

Third principle: commitment to the goals and mission of the parent organization

One of the fundamental principles of medical librarians' activities is effort to achieve the goals of the parent organization. "Thus, attention to the goals of the parent organization and the organization's efforts to protect the interests of sustainable development, according to ethical practices, is essential. Gharamaki and Fallah believe that the sign of this effort in increasing productivity is preference to the interest of organization rather than individual interest and adhere to the rules and moral values"(5). It seems that as the loyalty of medical librarians to the organization increases, efforts to achieve the goals of the parent organization are also more serious and more objective.

Fourth Principle: The marketing health information services

Due to the diversity of services and capabilities of medical librarians, many users do not have sufficient knowledge of these capabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to be exposed and available to users. One of the common techniques is social marketing. In this way, the use of effective messages and targeted media is effective method of introducing new services of medical librarians. The relevant sample of these activities is reflected in the research of Hodhodinejad (3).

Fifth Principle: training health users

Training of the user is the integral part of medical librarians' activities. The main reason is rapid changes in the field of

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information and communication technology, interest of users to search for information independently, lack of accurate diagnosis about validity of resources by users, lack of time for users, especially medical staff, lack of health information literacy skills in retrieval of information (6). Thus, medical librarians believe that it is necessary to provide and run written programs for users about some fields like laws and regulation of health information centers, facilities and equipment, software, strategies of search, evaluation and the effective use of information and copyrights. All of these needed skills are called Health Information Literacy (HIL).

Sixth Principle: Updated medical librarians

Due to rapid technological changes, the medical librarians' general and specialized knowledge has become out of date more rapidly. In such circumstances, medical librarians must keep effort for updating themselves (7). Atapour quoted from Cofman that if specialists have no updated knowledge and skills, there is no fit between the needs of professional and business capabilities and so he get caught to professional isolation (7). Medical librarians need to update themselves and develop their profession through attending educational programs, distance learning; attending conferences; reading relevant literature and researches; continuing higher education; and writing professional contents.

Seventh Principle: Enhancement of the professional status of Medical Library and Information Science (MLIS)

Status of any person or organization has a close correlation with the value of that person or organization in the point of view of the society. As long as the career (job) is not beneficial to the society, the activity and practitioners of that field will not be entitled a social status. So, it can be concluded that information content of health information centers, facilitation of access to information, increased functionality and capabilities of medical librarians (8), adherence to professional ethics, selection of medical librarians on the basis of professional qualifications and response to information needs of users at the right time and in an appropriate manner are the important factors in increasing the effectiveness of activities in the community of medical librarians.

Eighth Principle: value of time of health users

Ranganatan also refers to this principle in his forth rule. This principle accounts for many reforms in the realm of medical librarians's activity. Setting up and strengthening health information centers and information organization; providing research tools for researchers, such as bibliographies, indexes and databases; using new technologies to respond to users' questions such as e-mail, chat rooms; and asking a librarian, social media, etc. will have a major role in saving the users' time.

Science is based on principles. Rational and experimental principles are based on formation and development of any science. Sciences which have more powerful principles are considered more important. These principles are as much based on real human needs (2), and also scientific evidence has greater value. The eight principles of medical librarians in the health system are based on the same principles of Library and Information Science. However, due to differences in the nature and fields of activity of these two disciplines, we recommend that the librarians should revise them and suit tem to the new situation in the field of health. This article was an attempt to explain and interpret the framework and principles of medical librarians to adapt to new conditions.

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