Teaching information literacy – for the benefit of the future profession and lifelong learning?

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Introduction. Lifelong learning is a core concept nowadays. In a world changing rapidly one of the assignments of higher education institutions is to stimulate and encourage the students to lifelong learning. To train the students in information searching and information evaluation are therefore important tasks for university librarians. Do we teach for the future that awaits the students?

Aim. To examine under what conditions graduated dentists, dental hygienists and dental technicians search for needed scientific information. A study was made to investigate to what information resources they have access, and how they experience the information literacy training in retrospect. Our aim was to be able to evaluate our teaching in information searching. Are the information literacy skills that they learned during their education useful in their daily work?

Methods. An online web survey was sent to 164 students that had graduated from the Faculty of Odontology at Malmö University during the period 2005-2009. The survey consisted by 11 questions whereof 6 allowed comments. 97 persons (21 dental hygienists, 58 dentists and 18 dental technicians) responded which resulted in a response rate of 46%.

Results and discussion. The mostly used informations resources are Google, colleagues, books and journals. PubMed is the mostly used database. The use of other databases (Cinahl, Cochrane, ScienceDirect, Sociological abstracts and Web of Science) is very scarce. Dentists are the ones who most frequently seek information in books and journals. 79% of the respondents answer that they benefit from what they learned through the library's instruction and guidance in their work. However, lack of time often determines how often, and where, the information searching is conducted. Many of the respondents express that they have forgotten what they learned in information searching during their studies and commented that refreshing these skills would be beneficial.

Conclusions. How can we follow up the results from the survey?
- Inform of the services libraries provide such as walk-in-use to databases, interlibrary loans and book lending.
- Conduct refresher courses in information searching for alumni.
- Inform in what way free search engines or databases can be used for retrieving scientific information.
- Highlight open access medical journals.