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Improving health information knowledge for public libraries: a public library, cancer center and health science library partnership

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Improving health information knowledge for public libraries

A public library, cancer center and health science library partnership

Background

Since 2010, Becker Medical Library, the Program for the Elimination of Cancer Disparities (PECaD) at Siteman Cancer Center, and the St. Louis Public Library have been working to improve the health information available to the staff and visitors of the St. Louis Public Library.

The project has gone through three distinct, but related, phases:

2011 Staff Survey

The survey featured 15 questions to assess a variety of topics related to health information seeking, and why visitors to the public library might use it for health information.

The survey was offered to all branch staff, as well as technical services staff and public technology assistants. All branches had a response.

Of 68 staff identified, there were 62 useable responses to the survey, for a response rate of 91.2%.

87% of respondents believed visitors to the public library would benefit from more exposure to consumer health information and services.

Becker Library's subscription to SurveyMonkey® was used to distribute and analyze the survey.

“It would be great to have reliable health information regarding any health related issues.”

Public technology assistant

“The Good Health Spot” Kiosks



Using results from the survey, and a list of available publications, the group completed a collaborative ranking process that resulted in choosing 15-25 key publications for a kiosk.

With input from the public library marketing group, the name **The Good Health Spot** was chosen for the signage for the kiosks.

In August 2012, the kiosks were stocked and deployed to the 4 large regional branches of the public library. By September 2012, the kiosks needed restocking – a potential indicator of success.

Staff Training



In July 2012, the group offered two 3-hour, hands-on training sessions for public library staff.

The sessions covered MedlinePlus.gov, resources from the National Cancer Institute, and EBSCO Consumer Health Complete.

Additional topics included:

- the ethical provision of health information
- being a compassionate information source for cancer caregivers
- connecting interested library visitors to credible information about cancer education, prevention and treatment

Future Plans

- Hosting focus groups for the public, facilitated by PECaD
- Revising and repeating staff training on a regular basis
- Developing programming in response to identified community needs, such as coping with neighborhood violence, and Medicaid

Partnership Staff

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