

New Zealand Health and Disability System Review

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this review of the health and disability system.

The Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa (LIANZA) is the national organisation supporting organisations and professionals working in library and information services throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. LIANZA represents 369 institutions and 1260 individuals. From census figures there are about 6000 people working in libraries in New Zealand and almost 1300 of them are members of LIANZA.

Founded in 1910, the Association serves and promotes the interests of the Aotearoa New Zealand library and information industry. It advises and advocates on developments in libraries; promotes excellence and quality in librarianship with a range of awards and recognition. It works in partnership with Te Rōpū Whakahau, and is a member of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).

This submission is made on behalf of LIANZA Health-SIG, the Special Interest Group for health sector library and information professionals.

5 April 2019

Executive summary

Access to quality evidence-based information by health providers and consumers is an essential component in improving patient care. Access to quality evidence-based information is not universally available to health providers throughout New Zealand.

The New Zealand Health and Disability System review established in August 2018 offers an opportunity to redress this inequity. This submission highlights the need for service transformation and role redesign, better coordination and greater collaboration across organisational boundaries in order to redress inequity, remedy gaps and extend the provision of knowledge resources and services to all staff in the healthcare sector.

This submission makes a number of specific recommendations, guided by principles and guidelines that speak directly to the terms of reference of the New Zealand Health and Disability System Review document. These include: health equity, workforce needs, distribution of services, infrastructure and service delivery, current investment practices, the role

of evidence to inform practice and the opportunities associated with emerging technologies.

Current state

Equity of access to comprehensive and up-to-date evidence based health information for health care providers is essential for the provision of high quality health care. The explosion in health information and the cost of providing high quality evidence-based health information has meant a disparity of information that health providers have access to depending on their employer, their location or the type of service they provide to their clients/patients.

One of the conclusions drawn by the statement on health library services by The South Island Health Alliance (2015) was that... *“those health professionals who work for a large DHB or Otago University have greater access to a wider range of learning resources than those that work for smaller DHBs or in a community setting; there is wastage of effort as multiple organisations in South Island manage health libraries in isolation from each other”* (p. 1).

The University of Otago (2017) review of health library services concluded that there are substantial difficulties with the current provision of health library services across the health sector in New Zealand. *“There are huge variations in access to health information, not only between University staff and those in the health service, but between groups of staff, different DHBs and between hospitals and the community. Costs of provision are mounting, and pressure is being applied by publishers to increase costs to the system further. The purchasing and delivery of health information across our system is disintegrated and varied”* (p. 1). This review included consultation with the three main DHBs within the University’s operational area, representatives of the South Island Alliance and South Island Workforce Development Hub, Dr Don Mackie (at that time Chief Medical Officer for the Ministry of Health), and Professor Des Gorman, Executive Chair, Health Workforce New Zealand.

Furthermore, a survey of library resources and services conducted by a working group of the LIANZA Special Interest Group for health sector library and information professionals (2018) confirmed that provision of resources and services to support patient care and decision-making varies greatly across the District Health Boards (DHB). With smaller DHBs having substantially less access to information resources and consequently the information required potentially taking longer to acquire. The impact of this could lead to a reduced reliance on quality evidence to inform practice.

There is no centralised purchasing of core health information resources (like there is in the United Kingdom and Australia) which leads to each DHB only having the resources they can afford to purchase. Each DHB subscribes

individually to its own resources, which limits the ability to achieve economies of scale in both procurement and service delivery.

Moreover, currently there is no coherent and coordinated national digital resources framework to provide access to information resources and knowledge services to practitioners in primary care or community based health providers and NGOs.

Future needs and opportunities

"Information will increasingly become the currency of healthcare in the future, and our ability to access, understand and interpret it at individual and population level will be a key determinant in the future success of our healthcare system" (Health Education England, 2017, p. 98). Healthcare libraries provide vital access to the right knowledge, information and evidence when and where it is needed, to make decisions on treatment options, patient care and safety thus contributing to better health outcomes, life-long learning, research and innovation.

There has already been a seismic shift in the provision of library resources away from print toward digital collections. There is no question that access to digital information is the most cost effective and efficient means to disseminate knowledge resources to all practitioners. The focus now must be on both maximising the use of new technologies to embed these resources into workflows at the point of need, and to eliminate the inequities arising from publishers' licensing requirements. Mobile access to digital information ensures easy, cost effective and ready access to digital collections for busy health practitioners regardless of location, income or access to physical material.

This submission assumes that user expectations will continue to grow, that budgets for content cannot keep up with price increases and that advances in technology will continue apace. Each of these factors will drive change and present both opportunities and threats for the provision of library and knowledge services.

There is a strong culture of collaboration between the DHB Libraries, with some formalised purchasing consortia arrangements in place. There exists a highly developed system for document exchange internationally with DHB libraries having links to networks to support document delivery on a cost recovery basis.

However, efforts to address glaring inequities in access to information resources and the provision of knowledge and information services across the health sector are hampered by the lack of a national digital resources framework and governance structure. The National Library of New Zealand has experience in developing and facilitating a successful national digital resource purchasing consortium for libraries in the education sector with its

Electronic Purchasing in Collaboration (EPIC) framework. They could be a potential collaborating partner in developing a similar national framework in the health sector.

Seamless, equitable access to high quality evidence for health care providers across New Zealand must be the guiding principles on which we build a single coherent and sustainable national health library service. A centralised knowledge discovery portal has the potential to revolutionise and streamline operations and increase reach significantly, especially to isolated users.

Moving to a unified national system will allow library and knowledge services to respond nimbly to emerging health priorities, better facilitating knowledge and information sharing, dissemination and collaboration.

We need to re-think our approach to procurement of digital resources, shifting from a local approach to a coherent national strategy and framework conforming to the principles set out in the government rules of sourcing (New Zealand Government Procurement Branch, 2015). There are significant opportunities for DHBs to coordinate their combined investment, to communicate their requirements and more effectively influence suppliers and markets.

Collaborative, countrywide pricing and centralised procurement of a core collection of key knowledge and information resources are essential to ensure equitable access to core evidence-based information for all publicly funded practitioners. There are models in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada that have already taken this approach and can provide a guide to developing a truly national collection of digital resources (Lacey Bryant, Bingham, Carlyle, Day, Ferguson, & Stewart, 2018).

This submission is closely aligned with the government's proposed Digital Inclusion Blueprint whereby "a digitally included person, whānau or community has convenient, reliable access to affordable, accessible digital devices and an internet connection, and can confidently use them in their day-to-day life" (Department of Internal Affairs, 2019, p.10). Affordability of digital resources and inequitable access to those resources across the health sector are currently a barrier to digital inclusion.

Recommendations

As an outcome of the current New Zealand Health and Disability System Review we have the opportunity to leverage advances in technology and changes to funding and governance to review the delivery of library and knowledge services to achieve the following aims:

1. To influence the development of a national health digital resources framework and governance structure to provide a centralised collection

of electronic health resources via a single national portal that provides access to both primary and secondary care and available 24/7

This will

- Consolidate regional electronic licences into a national core collection
 - Streamline the procurement of digital resources to improve efficiency and minimise costs
 - Create equitable access for health providers across New Zealand
 - Support evidence informed decisions at the policy and patient care level
 - Involve the healthcare library, information and knowledge sector in the development of the framework
2. Invest in professional development of the healthcare library, information and knowledge sector workforce.
- To maximise its skills as it keep pace with technological development in health science and knowledge provision areas
 - Enable the best evidence based information for patient care.

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