Librarians: An Essential Part of the Public Health Workforce

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72% OF INTERNET USERS HAVE LOOKED ONLINE FOR HEALTH INFORMATION.

Yet, it can be overwhelming to sort through thousands or even millions of pages of search results. Unlike search engines, librarians are trained to evaluate and analyze all types of sources to connect patrons to accurate and trustworthy health information and services. Librarians can also help people navigate health insurance options or find health care providers.

http://www.ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/72-internet-users-have-looked-online-health-information
Public Library Association Announces Partnership with NNLM for “Promoting Healthy Communities” Training Initiative

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Responding to the sizable proportion of Americans who visit libraries to check out health guidance, the Public Library Association (PLA) has announced a partnership with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) to train public librarians to better provide consumer health information. Research suggests that those librarians have an important role to play. According to a 2010 study, 37% of library users, including 57% of seniors living in poverty, used public library computers to seek health information. But a 2013 survey of public librarians showed that a third of respondents were unfamiliar with resources that could help patrons with health-related queries. PLA Deputy Director Scott G. Allen said the new initiative, called Promoting Healthy Communities, is designed to tailor medical information for librarians serving a general audience.
Public libraries are critical to our nation’s health.

All Americans need access to current, reliable health information, especially as we navigate complex issues like health care, insurance and aging. Public libraries are a go-to resource throughout this journey.

This website, a project of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) and the Public Library Association (PLA), brings together a host of resources to help public libraries better serve their patrons’ health needs.
“Although it is possible to teach critical thinking to adults, it is likely to be more productive if the grounds for this have been laid down in an educational environment early in life, starting in primary school…

This also applies to medical education and to health professionals. It becomes increasingly difficult to teach these skills without a foundation to build on and adequate time to learn them.”

“Public libraries are free and accessible to all and are centers of community engagement and education, making them logical choices as partners for improving population health. Library staff members routinely assist patrons with unmet health and social needs.”

How public libraries help build healthy communities

Marcela Cabello and Stuart M. Butler - Thursday, March 30, 2017

Libraries as Partners in Promoting Public Health

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When we think about potential partners in promoting public health, let’s not overlook public libraries. Libraries in the 21st century provide a lot more than shelves filled with books. Libraries may provide services that support literacy, social connections, access to emerging technologies and other features that can positively affect health outcomes:

- Storytimes to promote early childhood literacy, and to give parents tools to use at home
- Guidance in the use of digital media with children
- Volunteer tutoring programs
- Computer labs to support students and job-seekers (according to census data, nearly 25 million U.S. households lack regular internet access, at home or elsewhere)
- Space for meetings, book groups, and other community dialogues
- Programs for children, teens, families, college students, adult literacy, entrepreneurs, and seniors
- Health information and screenings
- Demonstration sites for sustainable building and energy practices
The best messages will go unheard if individuals have not developed critical thinking and information literacy skills over time.
Impacts on library infrastructure and funding ultimately impact public health

The public health workforce should therefore make sure to include libraries and librarians in considerations of the systems and agencies that all work together to support shared improved population health goals.
References


References


