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To cite this article: Shannon Glover & Jennifer Reagan (2020) Shaping a Future for Library and CME through Partnerships, Medical Reference Services Quarterly, 39:2, 174-182, DOI: [10.1080/02763869.2020.1748419](https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2020.1748419)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2020.1748419>



Published online: 24 Apr 2020.



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## HOSPITAL INFORMATION SERVICES

*Priscilla L. Stephenson, Kate Daniels, Liz Kellermeyer,  
and Anna Beth Morgan, Column Editors*



# Shaping a Future for Library and CME through Partnerships

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to highlight the value of a partnership between library services and continuing medical education (CME) teams. Examples of a successful partnership between library services and CME within a health system will be shown. Through team collaboration, library and CME services provide quick access to educational resources and activities which benefit the delivery of optimal health care.

### KEYWORDS

Continuing medical education; library services; partnership; value; teamwork; collaboration

## Introduction

The traditional role of a health information professional has evolved over the last 20 years. With the evolution of technology in libraries, health sciences librarians have become versatile in many roles, allowing them to collaborate with colleagues within their institutions. In particular, library and continuing medical education (CME) teams have a history of supporting one another with daily work tasks. In some health systems, the roles of health sciences library coordinator and CME coordinator have merged into one staff position.<sup>1</sup> In other examples, some libraries employ a CME librarian to work in conjunction with the CME team on programming and accreditation.<sup>2</sup> It is indeed a benefit to have two skilled professionals who are experts in their respective fields providing educational assistance to a growing academic teaching organization. CME teams provide support for continuous improvement and learning to help physicians address gaps in their professional practice.<sup>3</sup> The role of the CME coordinator for a health-care system requires reviewing system data to identify practice gaps in clinical performance, competency, and patient outcomes. Using this data, the

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CME coordinator works with a CME committee to design education to meet the needs of the system and the physicians, which ultimately improves patient care. Annually, the coordinator compiles a report of CME activities for the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to ensure the system maintains accreditation.

Health information professionals have been assigned an array of job titles and roles to describe their function in healthcare, including terms such as liaison librarian and CME librarian. A liaison librarian's purpose is to improve the transfer of information between the library and one or more departments.<sup>4</sup> Historically, the term "liaison services" dates back to 1991 when the Houston Academy of Medicine developed an outreach project with Baylor College of Medicine.<sup>4</sup> For more than 30 years, librarians have worked with valuable stakeholders to provide professional services.

Depending on the setting, many institutions employ a CME librarian who works collaboratively with a CME team.<sup>4</sup> In the case of Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS), the roles of medical librarian and CME coordinator complement each other quite well but are distinctly different. "Liaison" sums up the partnership between the medical librarian and CME coordinator at NGHS. It shows the value in two teams working together to improve the quality of healthcare and the community. The medical librarian works with the CME coordinator to provide professional services that support clinician needs.

Regardless of the title used, the diversity in each role reinforces the specialized skills and services provided by both individual roles. Younghee Noh researched the roles and duties of health information librarians, as well as the required education and qualifications needed for the job. He concluded librarians should have the knowledge to guide people to the appropriate medical information. The skills needed to direct users to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge cannot be completed successfully by a CME coordinator unless specifically educated or trained for that task.<sup>5</sup>

Andrew Gerber stated that a strong potential relationship exists between the hospital librarian and the CME coordinator. The medical librarian and CME coordinator practice a deep interdependence with one another to provide valuable services to clinical staff at NGHS. In Gerber's article, his institution maintains two separate positions working together to serve library patrons and provide CME.<sup>1</sup> His article articulates by far the best way to describe the valuable relationship shared between the two teams at NGHS.

## Background

NGHS is a not-for-profit teaching community hospital system dedicated to improving the health and quality of the people it serves. The system

comprises four hospital locations (Gainesville, Braselton, Barrow, and Lumpkin) and seven urgent care centers. NGHS has 713 beds and more than 800 medical staff members representing over 50 specialties and 65 physician practices.<sup>6</sup>

The hospital system employs a library team with two full-time medical librarians (one supervisory health sciences library coordinator and one medical librarian), a part-time receptionist, and a CME team with one full-time coordinator and one part-time CME specialist. The health sciences library coordinator is centrally located at the main hospital in Gainesville and is key in supporting the CME team. The medical librarian is located at the Braselton location and is able to support CME projects, but focuses more on traditional librarian duties. Both library and CME teams have governing boards to assist with decision making, strategic planning, and academic focus of the teams. The CME committee and Library Committee consist of NGHS leadership, providers, staff, and community members. The two governing bodies overlap in membership to maintain transparency. The CME and library services teams both report to the Office of Medical Education. Both teams have a unique opportunity to work closely together to provide health information to NGHS clinical staff.

NGHS's mission is "improving the health of our community in all we do."<sup>6</sup> The mission of NGHS Health Sciences Library and Resource Centers is to support the informational and educational needs of all NGHS employees, patients, and their families. Supporting the NGHS hospital mission, library services are designed to provide high-quality, evidence-based resources for clinical decision making to improve the health of the community. Also in accordance with the organizational mission, NGHS provides an integrative CME program that supports and influences physicians' continuing professional development to promote positive patient outcomes. The reason both teams are connected and tied together is to support the mission and vision of the health system to impact the health of the community.

### **The Library and CME Partnership**

To support the institutional mission, the library and CME teams at the NGHS main campus have a history of supporting one another with daily work tasks. The health sciences library coordinator's central location at the main hospital enables her to assist the CME coordinator when she is unavailable to facilitate CME committee meetings. The library coordinator also can send providers interested in CME activity the application packet for CME approval. She also creates flyers for CME activities and markets

upcoming events on social media. The library coordinator manages the library's website and includes calendar events for CME activities.

Reciprocally, the CME coordinator is a huge asset and support system to library services. Her office is located behind the Health Sciences Library, across from the employee badge access entrance. Therefore, she can easily assist customers as they visit the library. She has been thoroughly trained to assist library customers with basic questions or tasks, such as accessing the library catalog to search for resources. She also represents the medical librarian, if unavailable, during new provider orientation. She can knowledgeably speak to new employees about the types of services and resources available from the medical library.

The library and CME coordinators both participate in professional development fairs. Each person has in-depth working knowledge to speak about each other's role within the system. For instance, during Graduate Medical Education interview season, the CME coordinator can fill in for the medical librarian during round robin sessions with potential candidates. She is familiar enough with the daily operations of the medical library to actively engage candidates about services. Both coordinators can reciprocally support one another during system orientations and CME activities. The bond between the library and CME teams provides for exceptional service to physicians and staff members throughout the NGHS organization. Often, both teams partner on case conferences, committee work, and CME activities.

### **Case Conferences**

Every month, the CME team hosts regularly scheduled series (RSSs) throughout the system such as Emergency M&M or Tumor Board case conferences. During these meetings, a physician champion leads key members of the organization in a lively discussion regarding recent cases. The objective of case conferences is to review unique patient cases and serious safety events that have occurred in the health system. These RSSs are designed to support clinical staff in delivering quality patient care. In addition, it is an opportunity to identify process areas for improvement and for clinicians to look at changing practice in how they will treat patients in the future.

The librarian attends these case conferences to support one of NGHS's core values of a passion for excellence in education. As these discussions take place, the role of the librarian is to perform real-time literature searches on key points from the discussions using resources such as PubMed, ClinicalKey, or Ovid. The librarian participates in this CME activity to support staff by providing the most current evidence-based resources

for clinical decision making. To aid in the decision-making process, the librarian compiles a list of citations per the discussions and sends to the CME coordinator. To follow up from the case conference, the CME coordinator and the physician champion combine the minutes and resource information, which are then disseminated to all attendees for additional educational support or professional development. The follow up to case conferences creates situational awareness so all clinical staff can be on the same page in treating patients.

### **CME Committee**

The CME committee meets quarterly to discuss educational opportunities identified from practice gaps and library resources. Before each meeting, the CME coordinator and librarian meet to plan agenda items. As a sitting member of the committee, the librarian plays an active role in the committee's plan for CME activities. The librarian reports on new resources or updates to existing products, solicits feedback for adding new resources, compiles collection development ideas, and votes on new CME applications presented to the committee. The CME committee serves as a consultant to the library advisory board to help determine point-of-care tools for the health system. The partnership between the CME and library teams has resulted in procuring DynaMed, Isabel, UpToDate, and other advanced resources for the health system.

Occasionally, the committee discusses the need for current literature on topics for CME approval. The librarian will conduct a literature review and compile guidelines to help the committee determine the need for CME activities. The library also provides the CME team with a monthly product usage report from vendors such as ClinicalKey and UpToDate. CME is dedicated to helping improve quality and safety indicators for the health system. To identify any potential knowledge gaps, the most frequently searched topics are used to plan future CME education.<sup>7</sup> The CME team then brings the identified opportunities to the CME committee to plan for future activities.

### **CME Activity**

The CME committee and library team identify gaps in knowledge, competence, and patient outcomes from product usage reports and core measurement data from the hospital's quality service team. The reports of frequently searched topics help the teams identify current subjects for which physicians may need assistance to inform educational programs. The committee devises a list of objectives, presenters, and expected outcomes.

The application for presenting CME programs is emailed to the physician champions for completion. Once the application is completed and approved by the committee, the CME coordinator directs the presenter to the librarian who will assist with searching the literature to ensure citations for the application and the presentation are current and accurate.<sup>1</sup> In preparation for presentation, the medical librarian provides physicians with additional resources, such as clinical guidelines or news reports from social media outlets. The CME coordinator, librarian, and media support team all inform presenters about copyright law and how to use images or videos within fair use practices. Once the presentation is completed, the CME team organizes a grand round in the hospital for all clinical staff. Deep interdependence is shown by both teams in supporting CME activities. The medical librarian assists with set up, sign in, and cleaning up after CME activities. At the end of the event, the librarian helps with handing out evaluation paperwork and helps attendees find additional resources to answer questions that might crop up during the activity.

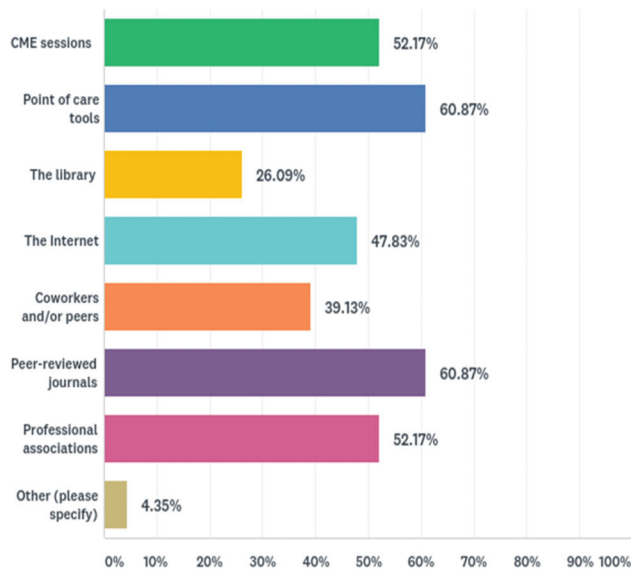
The library coordinator contributes to educational topics not only by furnishing product usage reports but also by reporting trends in requests for literature searches by providers. These also indicate the potential to develop education for practice gaps.<sup>7</sup> Reports of usage for UpToDate and ClinicalKey and literature search trends have been used to develop education around several topics, including the prevention of central line associated blood stream infections, sepsis, and allergies to penicillin. These contributions will help to develop better educational outcomes.

After many successes within the health system, the team concluded there are multiple opportunities to enhance the alliance by reaching out to the wider community. By providing community and staff members with access to consumer health information, the library directly supports the health and well-being of the community at large. To accomplish the mission of the organization, CME plans annual presentations on hot topics such as influenza, measles, HPV, and sepsis. After the CME influenza topic, the team decided to display information on flu shots, importance of vaccinations, and handouts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, both teams also decided to partner with the infection control department to provide education to employees and community organizations, such as the Senior Center, Boys & Girls Club, and local churches, on preventive health measures like flu shots and handwashing. Both teams will continue to partner with presenters on offering hot topics to the community.

### **Evaluation of Services**

As part of Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) accreditation, NGHS CME conducts an annual evaluation of services and educational

Where do you get the most current medical information? Check all that apply.



**Figure 1.** Where do you get the most current medical information?

opportunities provided, including an evaluation of library services. Both coordinators review participant responses to discover barriers to practice change or use of library resources. The survey is used in conjunction with the CME committee and Library Advisory Board to improve both service lines.

For the most recent survey, NGHS providers were asked how they retrieve current medical information. Providers searched for current medical information from CME sessions, point-of-care tools, peer-reviewed journals, and other sources (see [Figure 1](#)). More than half of the respondents mentioned using CME sessions to retrieve current information. While only 26% providers responded that they used the medical library specifically, about 60% mentioned using both point-of-care tools and peer-reviewed journals, which are information resources provided by the library. Providers were also asked how they perceive the impact of evidence-based library resources on improving patient care. More than 80% responded positively that library-provided information affected patient care. Data show that both the CME and library coordinators are providing staff with the information resources needed to provide quality patient care.

**Conclusion**

Educational activities offered by the health system are leading to better-informed clinicians and improved patient outcomes. Based on results from



the survey, both teams show value to the hospital system in providing clinicians with current, evidence-based resources that impact quality of care for patients.

Library and CME collaboration focuses on teamwork between both teams, leading back to the core values of the organization. To meet the mission of the organization, both coordinators rely on each other to provide health information to NGHS medical providers. The health information provided ensures NGHS staff has evidence-based practice information to make informed decisions. Clinicians provide quality care for residents in the community as a result of the team providing up-to-date health information. The partnership provides timely access to educational resources and activities, which benefits the delivery of optimal health care. These teams bring specific skills to provide physicians with precise customer service needs, such as attention to details, knowledge of rules and regulations, and a passion for safe quality care. Not only do these skills help providers, but they also help accomplish NGHS system goals and objectives.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express sincere thanks to Janeane Walker, PhD, Director of Student Outcomes, and Gretchen Holmes, PhD, Director of Research and Scholarly Activities, for their profound support and literary assistance in the proofing of this project.

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