

Health Information Needs and Utilization of Information and Communication Technologies by Medical Professionals in a Northern City of India

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Abstract : Introduction: In 21st century, due to revolution in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), there has been phenomenal development in quality and quantity of knowledge in the field of medical science. So, the access to relevant information to physicians is critical to the delivery of effective healthcare services to patients. The study was conducted to assess the information needs and attitudes of the medical professionals; to determine the sources and channels of information used by them; to ascertain the current usage of ICTs and the barriers faced by them in utilization of ICTs in health information access. Methodology: This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried in 2015 on hundred medical professionals working in public and private sectors of Chandigarh. The study used both quantitative and qualitative method for data collection. A semi structured questionnaire and interview schedule was used to collect data on information seeking needs, access to ICTs and barriers to healthcare information access. Five Data analysis was done using SPSS-16 and qualitative data was analyzed using thematic approach. Results: The most preferred sources to access healthcare information were internet (85%), trainings (61%) and communication with colleagues (57%). They wanted information on new drug therapy and latest developments in respective fields. All had access to computer with but almost half assessed their computer knowledge as average and only 3% had received training regarding usage. Educational status ($p=0.004$), place of work ($p=0.004$), number of years in job ($p=0.004$) and sector of job ($p=0.04$) of doctors were found to be significantly associated with their active search for information. The major themes that emerged from in-views were need; types and sources of healthcare information; exchange of information among different levels of healthcare providers; usage of ICTs to obtain and share information; barriers to access of healthcare information and quality of health information materials and involvement in their development process Conclusion and Recommendations: The medical professionals need information in their in their due course of work. However, information needs of medical professionals were not being adequately met. There should be training of professional regarding internet skills and the course on bioinformatics should be incorporated in the curricula of medical students. The policy framework must be formulated that will encourage and promote the use of ICTs as tools for health information access and dissemination.

Keywords : health information, ICTs, medical professionals, qualitative

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