

Knowledge retrieval needs of clinicians and the 'know how' index solution

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Aims

To meet the generic information retrieval needs of those working in healthcare, by the design, piloting, development and implementation of a 'know how' index. A collaborative index of prior knowledge.

Methods

An information index for knowledge retrieval was designed and constructed for regional use with literature searches to identify alternative approaches. Blocks and solutions to wider collaborative usage were identified followed by application at regional level.

Results

The basic local index was started in 2004 using word-based bookmarks and hyperlinks. It was known as LLAMA (local linked addresses, management and advice). A literature search and review of existing systems was published in 2009 and repeated in 2016. Systems to index and retrieve information remain poorly developed despite the mass of information available on the internet. No other system met the remit of a comprehensive index of prior knowledge.

Several principles emerged from application of this local index. Most information was actually non-clinical relating to local resources, referral routes and other organisations. A framework of keywords was generated and allowed more consistent retrieval. Information needed to be dated, with a named editor and original source.

It was shown that the index had to be a collaborative 'wiki' as it was difficult for a few people alone to handle all incoming information and updates. Collaboration also reduces duplication and individual wasted time as well as checking quality of the information.

Blocks to wider usage were identified and overcome. These included ease of user access, keeping up to date, reliability, tailoring access to need, governance, and indemnity. A new regional site was established in conjunction with the educational website 'Fourteen fish' in July 2015. On this site access was tailored to level of user by linking the existing local 'community' of users to a regional 'community' of users. The site included an improved interface

with keyword tags. User and editing rights were limited to NHS healthcare workers registered on the website and an expiry period for information removal was added. Hyperlinks were facilitated to take the user to the full updated original reference source.

Conclusion

This work has established a collaborative 'know how' index, which can meet clinician's needs for information retrieval. The principles of a know how index are relevant in any professional group, and have not been applied previously. A know how index can reduce duplication of effort, and save time, with the potential impact on patient safety, but these areas need further research to assess the extent of impact and cost savings for healthcare. ■

Conflict of interest statement

The author designed the original LLAMA index site and current know how index. The work is unfunded and there is no financial income from the site. This abstract was submitted and accepted in 2017 for the RCP conference but the author was unable to present due to hip surgery.

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