Knowledge is power – the Trent Primary Care Current Awareness Service

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The Trent Primary Care Current Awareness Service <www.tin.nhs.uk/home/keeping-up-to-date> is a Web-based networked information service hosted on The Improvement Network (TIN) Web site. Although produced by library and knowledge services staff within Trent, it is freely available to everyone involved in improving health services.

Background

Primary care librarians and knowledge managers from across Trent and South Yorkshire have been sharing information and resources to produce a monthly information bulletin on management issues, the *Trent Information Bulletin*, and the related *Daily Health News* since 2001. Regular feedback was received from customers and the *Trent Information Bulletin* was evaluated on an annual basis. The changes were implemented after discussion with the Primary Care Knowledge Managers Group.

New developments

We decided to develop a Web-based networked information service to be managed collaboratively by the editorial team. We were able to proceed with this development with support from Richard Marriott (Trent WDC), EIBS (the company providing the WDC Web sites) and Jacqui Fowler at TIN. It was decided to place the service on the TIN Web site <www.tin.nhs.uk>, as this is aimed at the whole of the NHS. One of TIN's purposes is 'to connect up the wealth of knowledge generated by people who do the job; making it available to all'. This service enables us to notify staff about the latest publications, guidance and research and so the section is called 'Keeping up to date' <www.tin.nhs.uk/home/keeping-up-to-date>.

Main features

- Central database for editors to enter and edit data

- Search options for users to find items

- Personalised email alert service

- Links to *Daily Health News* and *Trent Information Bulletin*.

As we started to work on the database structure,[1] others became involved in discussions on metadata tags, indexing and RSS technology. We also benefited from having a team of people involved as we could share out the tasks and use the expertise of our host organisations and work colleagues.

How it works

The four editors are responsible for entering data into the database, each looking after different subject categories. Data are added on a daily basis, keeping it right up-to-date. We encourage contributions from other librarians, but control access to the database to maintain consistency. Particularly important is the indexing. We assign up to five terms from the new Department of Health (DH) Taxonomy, currently in a beta version, so we are using a specific health management vocabulary to index the service.

What does it contain?

A good current awareness service is based on four main factors:[2]

- Knowing what topics to cover

- Knowing who wants what

- Knowing the sources for obtaining the latest information

- Supplying the information regularly and reliably.

What topics do we cover?

The Trent Current Awareness Service covers the following topics:

- National service frameworks – cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes, mental health, children, older people, renal services

- Modernisation and management – including education, training and development

- Health informatics – including new Web sites as well as the National Programme for IT

- Social care

- Public health – including health promotion

- Evidence and effectiveness – new clinical guidelines, HTA programme

- Parliamentary update and any legal items

- Statistics.

He@lth Information on the Internet

These topics are the categories and can be selected from a drop-down list.

Who is it for?

The intended audience is PCT staff or other staff tasked with improving services within primary care. It will also be useful to anyone requiring up-to-date information around management topics. The user can easily locate items of interest by searching within the category.

What sources do we use?

One of the original aims of our current awareness service was that participants would use Web sites or journals that they would usually scan in their day-to-day work to avoid unnecessary duplication and extra workload. With the increased availability of electronic journals, we have increased the number of titles we scan to include those from the national core content in addition to titles from participating libraries. We have a list of Web sites we check, including the DH, King's Fund, Health Development Agency, *etc.* The sources we use are listed on the TIN Web site.

How do we supply the information?

We are able to supply the information regularly and reliably because the service is a collaborative venture. The *Daily News* is a bulletin of health news stories that users can receive by email or view on the Web site. The *Trent Information Bulletin* is a monthly digest of publications, articles and Web sites produced from the database. The bulletin can be downloaded from the Web site or users can request a copy by email or sent by post from their local library. We can also use the database to produce bulletins for individual users or user groups such as the *Health Promotion Bulletin* for school nurses and health visitors that is currently being developed. The output can also be used by different networks or Web sites, such as the Public Health Network Internet site.

The database is updated daily and so the user is able to find very recent information by searching the database itself, rather than having to wait for the monthly bulletin to be produced. A very convenient method of keeping up-to-date!

Benefits

The main benefit to the editors is that we can each concentrate on developing one or two sections of the service and we save time. It also allows us to develop a better service collectively.

The benefits in terms of using the information are that it can be made more widely available and can be used in more than one way, although it is only input once.

With support from the National electronic Library for Health (NeLH) we have been able to set up newsfeeds, using RSS technology. RSS is software that reads XML code, with which each record is tagged, to pick up new records as they are added and send them to newsfeeds, which can be set up on individual PCs or Web sites.[3] The first of these newsfeeds will be providing information for the NeLH Web pages.

The NeLH is working in partnership with the Core Content Group and the NHS Library and Knowledge Development Network to develop a National Library for Health in late 2004. This current awareness service is seen as a key component of this new service. We would encourage other primary care library and information services to make use of the database and the RSS feeds. If you would like to be involved in either contributing or using the information in your own organisation please contact one of the editors. We are firmly committed to sharing knowledge, information and good practice.

References

1. Dextre Clarke S. *Interoperability: love it or loathe it*. Legal Information Management, 2003; 3(3&4) <http://titles.cambridge.org/journals/journal_catalogue.asp?mnemonic=LIM> [accessed 23/06/04].

2. Hamilton F. *Current awareness, current techniques*. Gower, 1995

3. Moffat M. *RSS – a primer for publishers and content providers*. EEVL, Version 1 August 2003 <www.eevl.ac.uk/rss_primer/> [accessed 23/06/04].

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