ABSTRACT

A study has been done to assess the information support available in the field of Psychiatry in the State of West Bengal in India. Awareness in mental health is gaining more and more momentum as a result of increasing number of patients due to societal conflicts, changing lifestyle, changing relationships, peer pressure, consumerism, competitiveness and other reasons. Quantity in terms of number of patients, doctors and other stakeholders involved in the treatment and healing process has increased manifold. Along with governmental sector, various voluntary societies and non-governmental sectors have also come up as service-providers to cope up with this situation of heavy influx of patients. In this context, the responsibility of providing precise and exact information to these mental health service providers falls upon the shoulder of the information professionals. To serve this need adequately, a proper assessment of the mental health professionals is to be done. Major protagonists involved are psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychiatric nurses and psychiatric social workers. Among these four, present study critically discusses and evaluates the nature and scope
of the information seeking behaviour and information use pattern of the main protagonist - namely the psychiatrists.

A study of 100 psychiatrists has been done out of a total population of about 250 psychiatrists working in West Bengal. Some of the parameters considered were Sex, Age, Qualification, Professional Association membership, etc. To what extent newspapers are useful to them; their publication details, journal use patterns, browsing of secondary materials, etc. have been explored. What information sources they use for their research publication have been delineated. Sources used for a popular lecture and also while delivering lecture for a learned audience have been dealt with. Time spent in literature search- either manually or through computer has also been covered. Dependence on the sources of their own institutions has been measured and the information need of the main protagonists on related subjects have also been assessed.

The chapter 1 of this study cover some basic areas on psychiatry and the psychiatrists that seem relevant to this work. Before embarking on the project first we tried to clear the ambiguities and develop a basic understanding of the premises. It covers the etymology, definitions, scope, importance, divisions, classification schemes and subject heading lists of Psychiatry, incidence rate in
psychiatry, history of Psychiatry in the world and India with special reference to West Bengal, government statistics on mental health and also important NGO activities in the relevant sphere.

All these information, we think, are pertinent to design and execute a study on the psychiatrists’ information seeking behaviour and information use pattern.

A survey has been done of the available literature of similar works on study conducted on bio-med persons in the world at large, in India in general and in West Bengal in particular in chapter 2 of this study. International and national studies in the Mental Health field have also been covered. Extensive literature search was carried out using different secondary periodicals like Indian Library Science Abstracts (ILSA), Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), E-resources like E-prints in Library and Information Science (E-LIS), Librarians' Digital Library, Medline/PubMed, IndMed, etc. and Review periodicals like Library Trends, etc.

Third chapter deals with research methodology where the purpose, scope, coverage, time, quantity, and objective of this study have been delineated. Different methodology used like sending questionnaire through post, through email or through colleagues or through other persons; or trying to reach them directly by attending
conferences or Continuing Medical Education on psychiatry has been described.

The fourth chapter contains results & discussion. Now the data were in our hand, we had to find ways and means to interpret this data in various means. So, in the fourth chapter, we did data tabulation to enable it to subjugate to different layers of mathematical calculation and formula application. This led to interpretation of this data and testing of the hypothesis. We broke up the questionnaire items into elements and sub elements and input dichotomous or numeric values against each so as to make them tenable towards mathematical and statistical calculation.

Different tables and numerical results came out and our hypotheses were tested for what they were worth. Some had passed the test and the rest few were rejected as unsuitable. Diagrams and discussions followed to expand further the ideas held within them. Limitations in the study and scope for further research have been dealt with.

The fifth chapter offers recommendations for a more effective library and information service better suited to the needs and necessities of our user group. This chapter also recommends the possible and probable initiatives needed by information providers in
this sector to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of the mental healthcare information. These initiatives –if adopted- may respond better to the emerging challenges of the new mental healthcare scenario.

Some appendices along with a select bibliography are added at the end. The Chicago Manual of Style\(^1\) has been used for Bibliographic Format for References.

**Keywords:** Mental health, Information need, Healthcare, Information providers, Psychiatrists

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