PREFACE

Librarianship is generally considered to be concerned with the principle and practice of selecting, acquiring, organizing, disseminating and providing access to information in accordance with the specific needs of groups of people or an individual. Medical Library Association’s (MLA) core vision statement, “Quality Information for Improved Health”, easily embraces traditional roles of acquiring, organizing, storing, retrieving, and disseminating quality information to health professionals and patients.

The emergence of evidence based healthcare and clinical governance has extended healthcare provider’s requirement for library and information services. These developments have the potential to expand the librarian’s role beyond the traditional area of information provision, into the involvement of practicing and teaching search filters and critical appraisal of the literature. Additionally as practitioners and teachers of evidence-based healthcare, librarians can establish an enhanced relationship with healthcare professionals, which increase the visibility of information provision and affects evidence-based patient care decisions. During the last four decade there has been concern within the health libraries profession worldwide that even as librarians are teaching and educating clinicians about good practice through evidence-based healthcare, the library profession has been operating without this evidence-based background. Evidence-based practice requires that decisions about healthcare and based on the best available, current, valid and relevant evidence. These decisions should be made by those receiving care, informed by the tacit and explicit knowledge of those providing care, within the context of available resources.

Clinical Medical Librarianship (CML) started life in America in the early 1970s through the efforts of Gertrude Lamb at the Kansas City School of Medicine,
University of Missouri. She identified a gap between what medicine as discipline knew about good patient care and the knowledge that was actually applied to the care of patients.

In recent years, clinical librarianship is recognized as an important library service and it is an excellent teaching tool. The need for clinical librarians who will save precious time for healthcare professionals who are always short in number, and who will by their services, contribute to enhancement of patient care, has been established in several studies. However, even with concrete proof of this need, the evolution of such professionals has been slow even in developed countries.

The need for the position of clinical librarians in India is very strong. Creation of highly skilled professionals who would reduce the burden of finding the best medical information, for healthcare professionals would definitely enhance patient care. But no study has been made in this regard. As such, a study focusing on the awareness, infrastructure, prospect and problems of establishing clinical librarian in clinical decision making in different healthcare settings has been felt necessary to improve patient care in Indian context.

The researcher previously worked as the librarian of a reputed private hospital in Kolkata. During that time he felt the need to carry out this study to find out the gap between theory and practice of clinical librarianship. The healthcare professionals have also shown their interest on such service.

This research work was started on April, 2008 at the Department of Library and Information Science of University of Calcutta to find out the facts about practice of clinical librarianship in private hospitals of Kolkata. This thesis has been prepared on the basis of data, collected through survey from a large number of healthcare professionals working in those hospitals.
A model framework has been prepared for standard for hospital library in India which relates to proper infrastructure for evidence based practice by healthcare professionals in clinical decision making after introduction of clinical librarian. A model coursework for clinical librarianship also has been prepared with a hope that it will be implemented in near future. The hospital librarians are descendants of their past, but they are also the creators of their future running across the limitations of their present.

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