

National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy

MLA Comments

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1. What are your suggestions on the Draft Vision, Goals, Strategic Directions, or Recommendations?

The Medical Library Association (MLA) supports the National Prevention Council's draft vision statement, goals, strategic directions and recommendations to shift the nation's focus from one based on sickness and disease to one based on wellness and prevention. MLA maintains that developing and promoting the use of scientific evidence in making healthcare decisions and improving the public's awareness of, access to, and use of quality health information will support quality health care and promote health.

MLA believes that ensuring that health professionals and the public have access to timely, relevant, accurate, high quality health information and supporting the development of the public's health literacy skills will facilitate successful accomplishment of many of the recommendations outlined in the National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy.

2. What evidence-based actions should the federal government take to address the Draft Recommendations?

- ***Encourage access to high-quality, relevant, evidence based health information through the services of a professional health sciences librarian.*** Americans are being challenged to seek information that will promote their health and help prevent disease. Studies show that there is an overwhelming amount of information on the Internet, but people need information training, and skills to understand what makes information valid. Librarians provide that training (1). Further, Google and other Internet search engines still access only a small percentage of available health-related information, and cannot perform searches using a controlled vocabulary and extensive limits and do not search databases that reside behind firewalls or sites requiring internal searches. Librarians have the skills and training to help the public find accurate, relevant, and timely health and wellness information to support just-in-time needs and to help them access trusted and reliable health websites (2). Research studies suggest that professionally led library services have an impact on health outcomes for patients (3).

- **Take advantage of existing health information and information programs and services.** As Congress works to address the federal budget deficit, developing strategies that seek to leverage existing programs and resources is becoming increasingly important. A vast portfolio of information resources offered by agencies across the Department of Health and Human Services already exist and are available to the public and health professionals. Utilizing these resources is a cost-savings strategy that also helps ensure the public has access to high quality, relevant information. Of the 278 million Internet searches conducted every day, 12.5 million are health related. With the overwhelming amount of information on the Internet, consumers need access to high quality, trustworthy information found in databases such as the National Library of Medicine's consumer database, MedlinePlus (<http://www.MedlinePlus.gov>), which offers information on more than 850 health topics. NLM's PUBMED CENTRAL (<http://www.pubmedcentral.gov>) has proven to be an important and well used resource. This digital archive provides the public, clinicians and researchers with free online access to a growing collection of full-text biomedical journal articles and is accessed by 420,000 unique users per day who download approximately 700,000 full text articles per day. A significant fraction of this use comes from the general public.

Other popular online resources such as NIH Senior Health, CDC Healthy Living, and AHRQ's Consumers and Patients website, also provide a wealth of information on topics addressing wellness and health promotion to disease intervention. These initiatives highlight the importance of interagency collaboration to leverage access to existing and new resources and services.

1. Medical Library Association. Myths and truths about library services [powerpoint]. [Internet] Chicago, IL: The Association: 2008, <http://www.mlanet.org/resources/vital/> [cited 10 Jan. 2011].
2. Henderson J. Google scholar: a source for clinicians? CMAJ 2005;172(12):1549-1550.
3. Weightman AL, Williamson J. The value and impact of information provided through library services for patient care: a systematic review. Health Information and Libraries Journal 2005;22(1):4-25.

- **Develop health literacy education programs.** Healthy outcomes and health literacy are interconnected. The Medical Library Association's 2008 Health Information Literacy Research Project found that low health literacy is linked to under-utilization of preventive services, poor knowledge about health, and poor health outcomes. For example, women with low health literacy are less likely to have had a mammogram or Pap test than women with higher literacy skills. Low health literacy is associated with less knowledge and understanding of one's own health status. One study showed that among patients with diabetes, low health literacy is associated with poor disease management and outcomes. Another study showed that 94% of diabetic patients with high health literacy knew what to do if they experienced hypoglycemic symptoms while only 50% of those with low health literacy knew what to do (1). A review of the project's results can be found in *Journal of the Medical Library Association* (2).

1. Medical Library Association. Putting information into health literacy: the health information literacy curriculum [Internet]. Chicago, IL: The Association [cited 10 Jan 2011]. <http://www.mlanet.org/resources/healthlit/index.html>
2. Shipman, JS, Kurtz-Rossi, S, Funk, CJ. The Health Information Literacy Research Project. [Internet]. J Med Lib Assoc., 2009 Oct; 97(4):293-301. [cited 10 Jan 2011]. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2759165/>

3. What evidence-based actions should partners (national, state, Tribal, local, and Territorial governments, non-profit, and private) take to address the Draft Recommendations?

Encourage collaborative initiatives at the regional, state, and national levels to support access to health information and the provision of health literacy education opportunities. Studies show that collaboration provides excellent opportunities to strengthen partnerships that fulfill many public health information needs. The Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce initiative <http://phpartners.org/>, a collaboration of U.S. government agencies, public health organizations and health sciences libraries, is an effective and unique public-private collaboration which provides timely, convenient access to selected public health resources on the Internet. Participating partners, including the National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the Medical Library Association (MLA), are working to ensure that the public workforce have the tools and resources to find and use information effectively to improve and protect the public's health. This collaboration provides excellent opportunities to strengthen the partnership between library science and public health in the use of health information and tools for purposes of improving and protecting the public's health (1).

MLA's Health Information Literacy (HIL) research study found that health care providers responded positively to a health information literacy curriculum offered by librarians and to related resources and services, namely MedlinePlus (<http://medlineplus.gov/>) and the information referral system known as Information Rx (<http://informationrx.org>). The study showed that a librarian-taught health information literacy curriculum did raise awareness about the issue among health care providers and increased both the use of National Library of Medicine consumer health resources and referrals to librarians for health information literacy support (2).

Collaboration also strengthens the effectiveness of outreach programs to overcome health literacy challenges and health disparities. For example, since 2001, the Santa Clara California Medical Center, Santa Clara County Library, and Plane Tree Health Library have partnered to operate a center for health literacy on the Medical Center campus to provide information on a variety of medical topics and conditions in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese in a variety of formats with a focus on east-to-read materials (3). The National Library of Medicine's Health Disparities Strategic Plan and Budget for Fiscal Years 2009-2013 http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/plan/NLM_FY2009_2013_Health_Disparities_Strategic_Plan.pdf builds upon a long history of library programs and services that support the NIH's efforts to understand and eliminate health disparities between minority and majority

populations. Programs such as NLM's Tribal Connections Project, conducted in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest Regional Medical Library (PNRML), are improving tribal access to health information available over the Internet and Web, forging new partnerships, demonstrating the key role of tribal community involvement and empowerment, and contributing to the evolving concept of community-based outreach (4).

1. Cahn, MA, Auston, I, Selden, CR, Cogdill, K, et al. The Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce: a collaboration to improve and protect the public's health, 1995-2006. [Internet]. J Med Lib Assoc., 2007 Jul;95(3):301-309. [cited 10 Jan 2011] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1924938/>
2. Shipman, JS, Kurtz-Rossi, S, Funk, CJ. The Health Information Literacy Research Project. [Internet]. J Med Lib Assoc., 2009 Oct; 97(4):293-301. [cited 10 Jan 2011]. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2759165/>
3. Parker, R, Kreps, GL. Library outreach: overcoming health literacy challenges. [Internet]. J Med Lib Assoc., 2005 Oct, 93(4 Suppl):S81-S85. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1255757/>
4. Wood, FB, Sahali, R, Press, N, Burroughs, C, Mala, TA, Siegel, ER, Rambo, N, Fuller, SS. Tribal connections health information outreach: results, evaluation, and challenges. J Med Lib Assoc., 2003 Jan;91(1):57-66.