

Arizona Health Academy: A Library's Role In Connecting High School Students with Health Information

Purpose

To determine the research skills and information seeking behaviors of sixteen students participating in the Arizona Health Academy.

What is the Arizona Health Academy?

The Arizona Health Academy is a health professions exploration and academic enrichment program for high school students. Established in 1995, it is hosted by Maricopa Integrated Health System.

Applicants must be current high school juniors and economically disadvantaged or members of an ethnic minority group currently underrepresented in the health professions.



Role of the Health Sciences Library

For the past three years, the Health Sciences Library has taken an active role in this program.

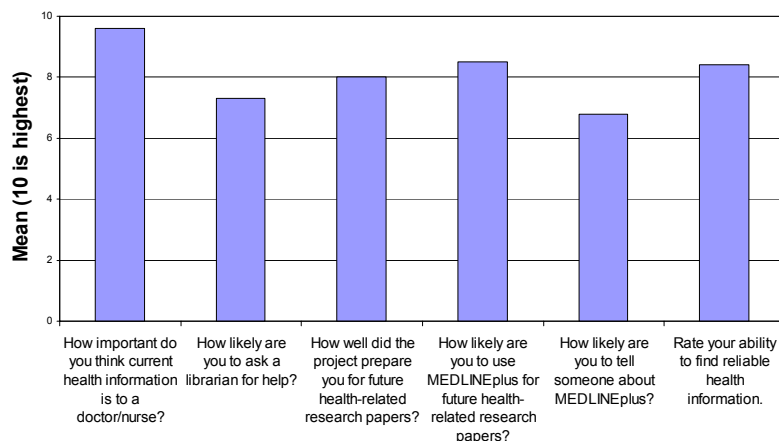
Staff provides a library orientation and an introduction to the print and electronic resources available in the library.

Over the course of the project, students also learn new research skills and become aware of the tools that health care providers use to locate information. Each student completes a research project that consists of a paper and an oral presentation on a topic of their choice.

The project also allows students to learn firsthand what a career as a medical librarian is like by working with staff. The goal of the research project is to help students develop research skills and to gain a better understanding of the important role that reliable information plays in health care.

Survey

The Health Academy students were asked the following questions after completing the 7-week program.



Comments from students

"I really enjoyed the research and the chance to accumulate extensive knowledge on something I otherwise wouldn't learn about."

"I learned how to find information faster."

"I like the fact that I got to learn something I never would have."

"I enjoyed learning how to create a presentation."

"I liked just knowing about the disease and actually understanding what the doctors are saying and doing to treat the patients."

"I really like medicine and the human body, so it was all fun and interesting."

Research topics chosen by students

- Stroke
- Asthma
- Down Syndrome
- Ectopic Pregnancy
- Sports Injuries
- Autism
- Wegener's Granulomatosis
- West Nile Virus
- Meningitis
- Sports Fitness
- Gastroschisis
- ADHD
- Lung Cancer
- Colon Cancer
- Diabetes
- AIDS and Africa

Introduction to MEDLINEplus

MEDLINEplus is a featured resource and a starting point for students to find reliable information.



The students are given a brief tutorial on how to search MEDLINEplus. The interactive tutorials and medical encyclopedia are very useful tools to help create their projects.



Conclusion

The Health Academy students are very enthusiastic and highly motivated to learn. After completing their research project, we felt they clearly understood the importance of reliable health information. However, their survey responses may generally overestimate their ability to find reliable information.

It is also encouraging to see the results indicate that students are quite likely to use MEDLINEplus as a resource for future projects.

Library staff enjoys the interaction with the Health Academy students and will continue to be involved in this worthwhile program.