Information therapy: Trout or myth, its feasibility and practicability in Iranian libraries

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Abstract: Background and objective: Information Therapy is described as prescription of evidence-based medical information to patients/their caregivers to enable them to have a correct health decision and or change the behavior to improve their health. It is about two decades that information therapy is practiced in progressive countries in which librarians play an active role. This study aims to identify whether Iranian health science libraries render information therapy to patients, what are the problems and prospects for information therapy service in Iranian health science libraries? What is the role of librarians in Information Therapy?

Methods and material: A survey method was employed to explore current state of Information Therapy (IX) services in Iranian health science libraries and its problems and prospects. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of hundred librarians which was randomly selected from membership list of Iranian Medical Library Association. Postal mail and email channels were used to distribute questions. However telephonic conversation and fax-mail were also utilized to follow up the correct administration of questionnaires, and wherever it was applicable and necessary the questions personally handed over the librarians. Data were gathered through the same channels and statistical analysis was done using SPSS Copy 15.

Result: A meager percentage of health science libraries in Iran render Information Therapy services. Majority of the responding librarians opined that librarians have an active and direct role to play in information therapy services. A minority of librarians in Iran have a supportive and indirect role in IX. The study reveals that there is no statistically significant relationship between practice of information therapy service and adequate access to resources as well as number of librarians in the library.

Conclusion: The study is a significant study in the state-of-the art of health science libraries with regard to providing Information Therapy service in Iran. It brings in the light the feasibility of health literacy and patient empowerment through Information Therapy service in which librarians, physicians and patients' interrelated collaboration plays a vital role.