

Embedded Librarian Within the World Health Organization's Incident Management Support Team (Imst): A Unique Opportunity to Bring Public Health Librarianship to the Inner Circle Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic*

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Abstract

Introduction

On 30 January 2020, the WHO Director General, Dr Tedros of the WHO Director General declared that the SARS-COV-2 outbreak constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). As a result of the PHEIC, WHO appointed an Incident Management Support Team (IMST) composed of WHO staff with the expertise and skills to respond to the PHEIC. In previous outbreaks, the WHO librarian's role has been limited to reference services, research support and current awareness but without directly being part of the core response team.

Description

The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique environment (the virtual work environment) where the WHO librarian was able to become "embedded" within the IMST. Due to the virtual nature of the team's meeting, as a member of the team, I was able to form stronger working relationship with the emergency response team during coordination meetings as well being responsible for research retrieval to support evidence based guideline development.

Outcomes

As an embedded librarian, I acquired a greater in-depth understanding of the issues and questions facing the overall team resulting thus better able to support team members in "real time".

* This abstract is not presented in the workshop

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In addition to the WHO situation, other librarians from government and international agencies such as CDC, ECDC, etc are interviewed to discover how their roles changed during the outbreak.

Discussion

This paper will highlight how the role of the librarian as a team member rather than solely as a support service. The WHO experience as well as those of other agencies will lead to a better utilization of librarians in future pandemics.

Bibliography

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