

INFORMATION BEHAVIOUR OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL, IBADAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the information-seeking patterns, preferred sources, challenges, and role of the library in supporting the medical staff at University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Findings indicate that while digital resources are increasingly utilized, a strong reliance on traditional print materials remains. Barriers such as time constraints, inadequate ICT skills, and access limitations were identified. The study suggests strategies for libraries to enhance information accessibility and literacy among medical personnel. Results reveal that 57.7% of respondents seek information daily, primarily for patient care, research, and professional development. The internet and online databases were the most commonly used sources, though only a fraction of respondents found them highly reliable. The UCH Library was significantly underutilized, with many citing lack of awareness, limited resources, and insufficient training as major factors. Despite these challenges, respondents demonstrated a strong motivation to engage in information-seeking, underscoring the need for improved infrastructure, staff support, and targeted information literacy programs to enhance the library's role in clinical decision-making.

Keywords: Information Behaviour, Medical Personnel, Academic Libraries, Information-Seeking Patterns, University College Hospital Ibadan

INTRODUCTION

Information behaviour encompasses how individuals seek, manage, utilize, and share information. The role of information in the health sector is pivotal to the effective delivery of healthcare services. Accurate and timely information is essential for healthcare professionals to make informed decisions regarding patient care. The continuous influx of new medical research and data means healthcare workers must stay updated with the latest developments to provide the best possible care. This necessitates strong information literacy skills among medical personnel to efficiently search for, retrieve, and utilize relevant medical literature. Information serves as the foundation for evidence-based practice, which is critical in improving patient outcomes. By accessing current and reliable information, healthcare providers can diagnose conditions more accurately, choose the most effective treatment plans, and manage patient care more efficiently. Moreover, information plays a crucial role in medical education and ongoing professional development, ensuring that healthcare professionals maintain their competency and stay abreast of advancements in their fields.

The way professionals and researchers seek information has undergone considerable changes with the emergence of diverse sources. The advancement of both modern societies and individuals relies heavily on the availability of appropriate information, presented in the right format and at the right moment. For healthcare professionals, having access to the most up-to-date information is crucial for fulfilling clinical and educational requirements (Wanyingi, Gatiti, & Mwanzu, (2023). With the rapid expansion of medical and healthcare literature, medical professionals must have fundamental literature search skills to access information essential for clinical decision-making (March, Vaikosen, & Akporoghene, 2020). Information is indeed a powerful tool; therefore, health sectors equipped with abundant information are better positioned to respond swiftly to cases and save lives. Consequently, health sectors rich in information often take proactive steps to educate health workers about the available literature on patient diagnosis, treatment, and management.

The information-seeking behaviour and information needs of medical personnel at University College Hospital, Ibadan have evolved significantly with the proliferation of various information sources. The progress of both society and individuals greatly depends on accessing the right information in the correct format at the appropriate time. However, for healthcare professionals, particularly those at the University College Hospital Ibadan, staying updated with the latest

information is vital to meet their clinical and educational needs. The volume of medical literature is expanding rapidly, necessitating that medical professionals develop essential skills for effective literature searches to inform clinical decision-making. Given the critical role of information, well-informed health sectors are better equipped to respond promptly and effectively to medical cases, thereby saving lives. Consequently, these sectors are proactive in ensuring that medical personnel are aware of the latest literature regarding patient diagnosis, treatment, and management.

Statement of the problem

In the dynamic field of healthcare, access to accurate and timely information is indispensable for medical personnel in delivering effective and evidence-based patient care. Information-seeking behaviour, which encompasses the ways in which individuals search for, evaluate, and use information, is a fundamental component of professional practice in medical settings. For healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and allied health workers, effective information-seeking is essential for making informed clinical decisions, keeping up with advances in medical knowledge, and improving overall healthcare outcomes. However, despite the increasing availability of electronic databases, digital libraries, and online medical resources, many medical personnel continue to face significant challenges in locating and utilizing relevant information efficiently. Studies such as Smith et al. (2021) have shown that healthcare professionals often struggle with retrieving reliable information due to limited digital literacy and a lack of formal training in information management. Johnson and Lee (2022) similarly noted that inadequate information-seeking skills can hinder clinical performance and reduce the quality of patient care. These limitations are further compounded by systemic barriers, such as time constraints, insufficient infrastructure, and underutilized library services. These issues reveal a critical gap between the information needs of medical personnel and their ability to meet those needs through current information systems and services. While tools and platforms exist to support clinical knowledge acquisition, they are not always aligned with the practical realities and behavioural patterns of healthcare workers. As Brown and Williams (2023) argue, enhancing healthcare delivery requires an understanding of how medical professionals interact with information environments and tailoring those systems to support their workflow. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the information-seeking behaviour of medical personnel at University College Hospital, Ibadan, with the aim of identifying the challenges they

face, evaluating the effectiveness of existing information services, and recommending strategies for improving information access, literacy, and usage in clinical settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research highlights the diverse information needs of medical personnel, which range from patient care and clinical guidelines to medical research and continuing education. Studies have shown that electronic databases, medical journals, and hospital libraries are key sources of information. However, challenges such as information overload, limited digital literacy, and restricted access to online resources persist. This section reviews relevant studies on medical professionals' information behaviour and the evolving role of libraries in medical settings.

Medical personnel require information for multiple purposes, primarily to enhance their ability to perform tasks efficiently. Access to relevant information is crucial for executing their responsibilities effectively. Moreover, their information-seeking behaviour plays a vital role in ensuring the successful and efficient delivery of healthcare services. Medical personnel require information on surgical procedures to improve surgical outcomes and ensure precision in operations. Additionally, they seek information on emerging trends in their profession to stay updated on advancements and modifications in nursing practices (March, Vaikosen, & Akporoghene, 2020). The need for information prompts individuals to engage in specific behaviours aimed at fulfilling that need. Information-seeking behaviour emerges from a recognized requirement for information and involves utilizing both formal and informal sources, with varying degrees of success in obtaining relevant data (Ali & Jan, 2020). These actions may include consulting peers, searching scholarly and subject-specific databases, and browsing the internet (Gordon, Cameron, Chaves, & Hutchinson, 2020). This behaviour is fundamental to human nature, as individuals continuously seek knowledge. It encompasses key actions taken when individuals identify their information needs and actively pursue solutions (Schrimppff, Fisse, Link, Baumann & Klimmt, 2025). Additionally, factors such as institutional affiliation, professional role, field of expertise, rank, and level of academic training can significantly influence information-seeking behaviour. The level of satisfaction experienced during the information-seeking process plays a crucial role in determining whether users will return to the library or not. When clients find the services effective and reliable, they are more likely to develop trust and continue utilizing the library's resources. Conversely, if their expectations are

not met, they may explore alternative sources to fulfill their information needs (March, Vaikosen, & Akporoghene, 2020).

Ota, Azuma, and Nishimura (2017) asserted that information-seeking behaviour varies significantly based on factors such as educational qualifications, the institution where basic training was received, job rank, employment type, and the ICT environment in which individuals operate. They further emphasized the importance of creating environments that promote information-seeking among the medical personnel across different departments. Additionally, they highlighted the need for comprehensive information literacy education to enhance and support the medical personnel ability to seek and utilize relevant information effectively. Eftekhari and Hayati (2016) noted that information-seeking behaviours stem from users' specific information needs, which arise when they feel the urge to acquire knowledge. Similarly, Savolainen (2024) argued that researchers employ various techniques to gather information, with their approaches being shaped by multiple influencing factors. As a result, different researchers exhibit diverse information-seeking behaviours based on their unique circumstances and requirements.

The accessibility of information, efficient utilization of resources, and the removal of obstacles such as addressing time limitations are key factors shaping physicians information-seeking behaviour (Daei, Soleymani, Ashrafi-Rizi, Zargham-Boroujeni, & Kelishadi, 2020). Due to their demanding schedules, physicians often have minimal time for self-directed learning, making it essential for information to be both high-quality and easily accessible. Although they may invest considerable effort in searching for relevant data, the availability of well-organized and readily usable information is crucial (Abukari, Menka, & Narh, 2020). This perspective aligns with Onyeke & Ezeani (2024), who stressed the importance of medical libraries providing reliable and easily accessible resources. However, research suggests that physicians in teaching hospitals do not always maximize the use of health information resources, likely due to time constraints and the physical distance from medical libraries (Nwafor-Orizu & Onwudinjo, 2015). The failure to utilize these resources effectively can have serious consequences, potentially compromising patient care and public health.

Looking at various Information channels, channel refer to physical or digital platforms across various media that facilitate access to potential information (Buasuwan, 2021). Boloka, (2022) highlighted several channels through which health workers acquire information, including

libraries, the internet, medical journals, electronic databases, training programs, workshops, conferences, television, radio, and newspapers. Terhemba, Obeka, & Yusuf, (2023) noted that health information can be obtained through various channels, including friends, healthcare professionals, radio, posters, and other visual aids. Additionally, books, newspapers, television, magazines, films, and video presentations serve as important sources. Consulting experts, attending seminars, workshops, conferences, and training programs, as well as utilizing libraries and the internet, are also key avenues for acquiring health-related information. Yilase and Obeka (2023) identified severe understaffing and time constraints as significant barriers to knowledge exchange among health workers. Many healthcare professionals are overburdened with responsibilities, leaving them with little time or energy to share experiential knowledge. At the national level, busy schedules are a primary reason for limited knowledge sharing, and some workers lack both the time and adequate incentives to contribute to reports used in national health information systems.

A major challenge to information flow occurs just below the district level, where written directives are often replaced by oral communication either in person or over the phone. This reliance on verbal exchanges increases the risk of misinterpretation and poor recall, which is concerning since experts and consultants serve as primary information sources for many health workers. Additionally, at regional and community levels, information is often scarce and shared in ways that make it difficult to act upon or retain. To address these issues, oral communication should be supplemented with visual presentations and appropriate print materials that reinforce key points and enable users to access further information.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the information needs and seeking behaviour of medical personnel in University College Hospital, Ibadan. The objectives are to:

1. identify the information needs of medical personnel in University College Hospital.
2. assess sources of information used by the medical personnel.
3. assess the extent to which the medical personnel use the library in University College Hospital.
4. identify the constraints affecting the information-seeking behaviour of medical personnel in University College Hospital.

Research Question

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the information needs of medical personnel at the University College Hospital, Ibadan?
2. What sources of information do medical personnel at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, rely on?
3. What are the extends that medical personnel at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, use the library to seek information?
4. What are the constraints affecting the information-seeking behaviour of medical personnel in University College Hospital, Ibadan?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The total enumeration for this study comprised medical personnel (including doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals) working at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan. A total of 52 respondents constituted the sample size for the study. Data were collected through the use of a self-structured questionnaire designed based on the research objectives. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure respondents' opinions and behaviours. Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores.

RESULTS

Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Table 1: Analysis of Demographic Distribution on the Information Behaviour of Medical Personnel in University College Hospital, Ibadan

Statement		Frequency	Percentage
Profession	Other	25	(48.1%)
	Allied Health Professionals	22	(42.3%)
	Nurses	3	(5.8%)
	Doctors	2	(3.8%)
	Total	52	(100.0%)
Qualification	Diploma	25	(3.8%)
	B.Sc	32	(61.5%)
	M.Sc	12	(23.1%)
	PhD	6	(11.5%)
	Total	52	(100.0%)
Year of Experience	1-5	17	(32.7%)
	6-10	16	(30.8%)
	11-15	10	(19.2%)
	15 and above	9	(17.3%)
	Total	52	(100.0%)

The demography table revealed that a majority of the respondents were either allied health professionals (42.3%) or categorized as “others” (48.1%), which includes roles such as laboratory scientists, data officers, and administrative staff. Only 3.8% were doctors and 5.8% nurses. This indicates that while doctors and nurses are key medical staff, other allied

professionals play an equally critical role in the hospital's information ecosystem. A significant 75% of respondents had tertiary or postgraduate qualifications, indicating a well-educated workforce capable of engaging with complex medical information, a factor critical to effective information-seeking behaviour (Wanyingi, Gatiti, & Mwanzu, (2023). Additionally, 63.5% of respondents had less than 10 years of professional experience, which aligns with findings by Ota, Azuma, & Nishimura (2017) that younger or mid-career professionals often engage more with digital information due to familiarity with ICT tools.

Result 1

Table 2: Library Use and Satisfaction

Library Use Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Never	10	19.2
Rarely	30	57.7
Occasionally	10	19.2
Frequently	2	3.9
Total	52	100

Mean **Satisfaction** **Score:** **2.3**

(On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 = Very Dissatisfied and 4 = Very Satisfied). The average satisfaction level is below moderate, suggesting that most respondents are not highly satisfied with the medical resources available in the UCH Library.

The data presented on table 2 shows that, most participants indicated that they frequently needed information on current medical trends and research, professional development, and patient care procedures. About 57.7% reported that they seek professional information daily, while the rest did so occasionally or less frequently. Over half (57.7%) of respondents reported seeking medical information daily. Their primary motivations included enhancing patient care (38.5%), conducting research (34.6%), and pursuing professional development (26.9%). These needs highlight the critical role of current and relevant information in clinical decision-making and career advancement. This aligns with the view of March, Vaikosen, & Akporoghene, 2020, who emphasized that up-to-date information access is vital for evidence-based medical practice. They

observed that healthcare professionals require ongoing access to medical knowledge to stay current with industry developments. The most frequently used sources included the internet (e.g., Google, medical websites), medical journals, and conferences. However, only 38% of respondents found these sources very reliable, with 50% rating them as only somewhat reliable. This indicates a reliance on freely available but potentially unvetted information. According to Gordon et al. (2020), such reliance often stems from limited training in evaluating digital resources, highlighting a need for structured information literacy programs. Ali & Jan (2020) similarly noted that medical personnel often lack formal training in distinguishing scholarly sources from general web content. The UCH Library was underutilized, with 57.7% reporting rare usage and 19.2% never using it. Primary reasons for low usage included lack of time, preference for digital alternatives, and limited awareness or access to available resources. Satisfaction scores were modest: staff assistance scored $M = 3.2$, while access to databases was rated low at $M = 2.6$. These findings echo the study by Smith et al. (2021), which revealed that Nigerian healthcare workers often bypass traditional libraries due to time constraints and underdeveloped electronic services. Brown & Williams (2023) further emphasized the need for hospital libraries to adapt by aligning services with user behaviour and expectations.

Result 2

Table 3. Challenges Affecting Information-Seeking Behaviour

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time constraints due to workload	35	67
Poor internet connectivity	25	48.1
Limited access to up-to-date materials	20	38.5
Lack of awareness about available resources	18	34.6
Inadequate ICT skills	14	26.9
Total Mentions	112	

Multiple responses were allowed, which make the totals to exceed 52. The most common challenge is time constraints due to workload, reported by over two-thirds of respondents.

The data presented on table 3 shows that, the key barriers included workload-related time constraints (67.3%), poor internet connectivity (48.1%), limited availability of up-to-date materials (38.5%), and inadequate ICT skills (26.9%). These challenges are consistent with findings by Ota, Azuma, & Nishimura (2017), who highlighted infrastructural limitations as a major obstacle to information access in healthcare environments. Schrimpff, Fisse, Link, Baumann & Klimmt, (2025) also pointed out that institutional context and professional roles influence how and where individuals seek information, especially when faced with systemic barriers.

Recommended Solutions to Challenges

Table 4

Suggested Solution	Frequency	Percentage
Improved access to electronic database	20	38.5
More up-to-date medical resources	18	34.6
Training on effective information retrieval	10	19.2
Better internet connection and power supply	8	15.4
Government support and policy improvement	5	9.6

The data presented on table 4 shows that, Participants proposed practical solutions such as improved access to electronic databases (38.5%), frequent updates of medical resources (34.6%), enhanced ICT training (19.2%), and better internet and power infrastructure (15.4%). These responses align with Wanyingi, Gatiti, & Mwanzu (2023), who advocated for the development of digitally inclusive libraries and the integration of information literacy into workplace training programs.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study demonstrate that medical personnel at University College Hospital, Ibadan, exhibit strong information-seeking behaviours, largely driven by their responsibilities in patient care, research, and professional development. As shown in the analysis, 57.7% of respondents seek information daily, mainly using digital tools like the internet and medical websites. This supports the argument by March, Vaikosen, and Akporoghene (2020) that medical professionals rely on up-to-date information to improve clinical outcomes and adapt to evolving trends in healthcare. Information needs among these professionals are diverse, covering everything from treatment protocols and diagnostic methods to drug updates and continuous education.

Although most respondents preferred internet-based sources, only a fraction found these sources highly reliable. This aligns with the findings of Gordon et al. (2020) and Ali & Jan (2020), who note that the ease of internet access does not always guarantee the use of high-quality or peer-reviewed content. The lack of formal training in digital literacy may leave healthcare workers vulnerable to misinformation or inefficient searches. Additionally, Schrimpf, Fisse, Link, Baumann & Klimmt (2025) emphasized that an individual's role, institutional support, and academic background significantly influence their information-seeking behaviour, a pattern echoed by the high rate of information use among early-career respondents with higher education levels in this study.

Despite a well-documented need for credible information, the UCH Library appears underutilized. Over half of the respondents rarely use it, citing lack of time, unawareness of services, or preference for online resources. These findings resonate with Ota, Azuma, and Nishimura (2017), who pointed out that even when medical libraries exist, they may not effectively support users if staff lack access or digital pathways are not well developed. This disconnect between library availability and usage implies that institutional information resources are not fully integrated into clinical routines at UCH.

In examining how well the library meets the information needs of UCH staff, the findings indicate significant gaps. Respondents reported limited use of reference or lending services, no formal training on information literacy, and low satisfaction with electronic resources. These challenges align with the findings of Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami, and Salami (2014), who emphasized that availability is not just about owning materials but ensuring they are accessible

and tailored to user needs. Similarly, Ajayi and Bakare-Fatungase (2025) urged medical libraries to provide timely and relevant information at the point of care to remain relevant to users.

This underperformance may explain the library's limited impact on respondents' professional activities. According to Okafor, Njoroge, and Kimani (2023), the effectiveness of a medical library depends on both the quality of its resources and their accessibility. Furthermore, the finding that library services are not satisfying information needs highlights the need for strategic upgrades in digital collections and service models. As Abukari, Menka, and Narh (2020) suggest, medical professionals already have limited time for independent learning, making it essential for information to be easily accessible, well-organized, and readily usable.

These concerns align with the findings of Nwafor-Orizu and Onwudinjo (2015), who noted that inconvenient access to libraries and the lack of integration with hospital workflows often lead to poor utilization of services. Moreover, Onyeke & Ezeani (2024) stress that for medical libraries to remain relevant, they must provide services that are not only reliable but also convenient, especially for busy professionals. When library resources are not seen as efficient or directly useful, health workers may turn to quicker, less reliable alternatives, ultimately undermining patient care.

This study's findings also affirm the conclusions of Eftekhar and Hayati (2016) and Savolainen (2024), who argue that information-seeking behaviours are shaped by personal preferences, access, and situational demands. Yilase and Obeka (2023) added that information-sharing is often hindered by time constraints, lack of incentives, or poor communication structures. At UCH, the barriers of infrastructure, lack of awareness, and system inefficiencies seem to contribute significantly to the underuse of libraries, despite clear evidence that medical staff are motivated to seek information.

Lastly, looking at the broader picture of information access, this study supports the arguments of Boloka (2022), Terhemba, Obeka, & Yusuf, (2023), who observed that healthcare workers use multiple information channels including workshops, colleagues, radio, and printed materials. These alternative channels remain vital, especially in environments where digital tools are either inadequate or underused. Integrating such platforms alongside improved library services could bridge information gaps and enhance knowledge dissemination across hospital departments.

In summary, the findings confirm that information-seeking among UCH medical staff is active but challenged by access, infrastructure, and service-related constraints. Libraries must be reimagined not just as information warehouses but as dynamic, accessible, and user-driven environments capable of supporting clinical excellence and lifelong learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings and conclusion of the study, the following practical recommendations are considered relevant.

First, hospital management needs to invest in modern digital infrastructure. This includes subscribing to reputable medical databases like PubMed and HINARI and ensuring that these resources are regularly updated and easily accessible to all staff. Upgraded digital access must be complemented by stable internet connectivity and uninterrupted power supply, as these are foundational to any form of digital engagement. In line with this, enhancing the hospital's ICT infrastructure will significantly improve timely access to reliable medical information. Secondly, capacity-building through targeted training is essential. Healthcare staff should undergo regular workshops focused on digital literacy, database navigation, and critical evaluation of information sources.

Finally, the hospital must institutionalise information literacy by embedding it into staff development policies. Library collections both physical and digital should be continuously updated, and the study environment should be made more conducive through improvements in facilities. Leadership support is crucial to this effort. Collectively, these actions can enhance clinical decision-making, increase research productivity, and improve overall satisfaction with information services at UCH.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the information behaviour of medical personnel at University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, highlighting key patterns in information needs, sources, library usage, and challenges. The findings revealed a high demand for current, credible, and accessible information, particularly for purposes of patient care, research, and professional development. Despite this need, there was a low level of library use and a reliance on informal internet sources, suggesting a disconnect between user needs and institutional resource provision.

Challenges such as time constraints, poor internet connectivity, and limited digital literacy were found to hinder effective information-seeking. Furthermore, satisfaction with available library services was moderate, with staff indicating the need for improved access to up-to-date resources, better infrastructure, and increased awareness of existing services. These issues are consistent with prior studies, underscoring the need for strategic interventions in health information management.

In conclusion, fostering an information-rich environment at UCH will require a multi-faceted approach involving infrastructure upgrades, digital training, policy integration, and institutional support. Implementing the study's recommendations can significantly improve access to quality information, enhance clinical decision-making, and support the ongoing professional growth of healthcare providers.

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