ETHICS IN LITERATURE SEARCHING

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ETHICS

Focus:
It is ethically important to know

- How to search correctly
- That it IS important - to know how to search correctly!
LITERATURE SEARCHING

Important for

- Academicians
- Researchers
- Librarians & Information specialists
- Authorities in Medical colleges / hospitals / Govt of India
- Students
It is ethically important to

- Teach the latest – especially in disease management
- Guide projects / theses correctly
- Manage patient care based on best evidence
RESEARCHERS

Involved in Clinical Trials / RCTs? Ethics requires you to Search correctly

- To establish the need for the Trial
- To find out any adverse event reported in the past. (“First do no harm”)
  - Famous Johns Hopkins – Hexamethonium case
- During the trial for updates
- While reporting the trial for accurate referencing

RCTs = Level I Evidence!
RESEARCHERS

Involved in Systematic Reviews?

- **Every** RCT needs to be identified – each is a “building block of Evidence”
- Search – “thorough” for sensitivity and should include hand searching
- Search strategy – proper reporting for continuous update of the review
Poor reporting and inadequate searches were apparent in systematic reviews of adverse effects.

Is this ethical??
INFORMATION SPECIALISTS

Need to know
- All important resources
- How to document and save strategies
- How to interact and work responsibly “with the user” to provide a skilled literature search
- About plagiarized / pirated resources
- Confidentiality issues – eg not to share searches done for one user with another
- Ethics question – Pharma co says “Give me only positive results about my drug”
EDITORS

Or anyone involved in medical writing - needs to know / look out for

● Inappropriate referencing
  – Non existent article in existent or NON-existent source
  – Author claiming authorship when not listed as author
  – Altering authorship order
  – And so much more!

STUDENTS - THESIS

- One important objective in PG education - learning research methodology through Thesis
- Ethics involves - Searching
  - To choose a topic
  - During the research
  - While writing the thesis

Reality:
- Redo a 5-year old thesis…. 
- Look for references “after” finishing theses…
- Is this “not teaching / learning of the right research methodology” ethical?
FOR A GOOD LITSEARCH

Every user of information needs to know

- Various databases, their scope of coverage
- How to
  - Get a “reading list” very quickly
  - Get very specific information
  - Find a needle in a haystack
  - Create “search strategies” & recall them when needed
LACUNAE - SYSTEM

- Specific examples - applicable across the categories of
  - Information users
  - Those responsible for providing the right infrastructure
SELECTING PAPERS & REFERENCING

Requested to check

ANOTHER INTERESTING CASE

Paper on Etiology of epithelioma among the Kashmiris by Elmslie WJ.

- For years – the reference was “repeatedly” given by authors as
  - 1866;1:81-3
  - (81-3 was a reference in the year 1900 in BMJ)

The average PubMed user in India knows only 20% of features and utilities*
Many know nothing to minimum about
  – Cochrane Library / its free availability in India*
  – ERMED and how to exploit it
Result – HUGE waste of time
  (which is unethical!)

*Source: Feedback forms collected from around 50 half day PubMed training programs conducted during 2008-2010
LITERATURE SEARCHING PROCESS

Most information users
• Use only text words to search
• Navigate maximum four result pages
• No clue about relevance / recall searching
  – “No time / incentive to practice even if taught”
• Look for full text free online
  – “No time” to visit the library / inconvenient timings
• Many have not learnt how to reference
RESULT

- They actually waste time of those who read their articles
- Which are based on bad searching.

Is this ethical?

And...Food for thought....
- Some of these individuals are on Editorial boards of journals – are they the right people?
INFORMATION ACCESS PROVIDERS / DECISION INFLUENCERS

Provision of “enhanced access” for users

- Customizing PubMed for Institutional Collections
- Maximum utilization of ERMED – include it in PubMed customization
- Union Catalogs of Journals in all libraries
- Enhance Web based resources – improvement over print resources
Fact.
Only about **Eight** libraries in India have created such filters though it is a **free facility**

This – due to ignorance
Is this ignorance ethical?
INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDERS

Resources built with Tax payers money - disappear / are not maintained

- Union Catalog of Medical Journals
  uncat.nic.in

- OpenMed – Repository – openmed.nic.in

- National Health Information Collaboration – nhicindia.org
### How it began

**Find Health Information by Health Topic:**
- Acute respiratory Infections
- Diarrhoeal diseases
- Iodine deficiency
- Mental health
- Tobacco use
- Blindness and Eye diseases
- Filariasis
- Leprosy
- Poliomyelitis
- Tuberculosis
- Cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Malaria
- Population and Health

**Find Health Information by Speciality:**
- Anesthesiology
- Biochemistry
- Dermatology
- General Medicine
- Paediatrics
- Aviation Medicine
- Anatomy
- Community Medicine
- Forensic Medicine

**Find Health Information by Information Type:**
- Scientific Articles
- Reference Materials
- Telemedicine
- Continuing Medical Education
- Thesis
- Policies and Guidelines
- Research Projects
- Official Statistics
- E-Journals
- Protocols
- Funding and Grants

Search for Information Enter Keywords.
What it has become…
Is this ethical??
RESPONSIBILITY OF INFORMATION USERS

Need to learn / learn about
- Citation matchers for accurate referencing
- Search techniques for relevance / recall
- Further – need to learn
  - To eliminate retracted / duplicate / redundant publications
  - Documenting search processes
  - Interacting with information professionals
RESPONSIBILITY OF ACCESS PROVIDERS

- Maintain resources created
- Create best possible “access enhancements” by exploiting technology
- Revise budgets / methods for access to maximum
- Ensure maximum utilization – issue directives
ETHICS & LITERATURE SEARCHING

Cannot be ignored in the “Information Age”

- Authorities need to maximize access
  - For available as well as new resources
- Faculty – stay updated – teach students the latest & guide research correctly
- Trained information professionals – stay updated – train users
- Users learn correct search & referencing techniques
THANK YOU

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