

Tracking Student Searching Skills

Do Medical Students Retain Effective Search Skills Over Time?

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Objectives

To demonstrate medical students' retention of effective search skills from 1st year to 3rd year

Setting/Population

Who: Medical Students

What: Support Competency Based Objective of Life Long Learning, Problem Solving, & Personal Growth

Where: Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine (SSOM) Maywood, IL

How: The library is directly involved in the achievement of this competency by providing instruction in research techniques.



1st year Medical Students

A required hands-on class which is part of the Patient-Centered Medicine (PCM-1) course. Students learn to:

- Identify and use library resources
- Do an effective Ovid Medline search.

Students are required to complete an assignment in which they are expected to apply the searching techniques taught them in class.

Librarians then critique the assignment and return them to the students. Students whose work “does not meet expectations” are required to redo the assignment.

3rd year Medical Students

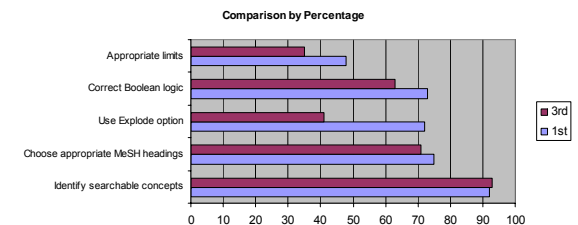
During the family medicine clerkship rotation, students:

- Complete a computer based learning (CBL) module, “Searching for evidence-based-medicine literature”, developed by the librarians;
- Complete an EBM project in which they identify a clinical question, do a literature review, and write a report discussing their findings and treatment decision;
- Meet with a librarian after completing their research to discuss the student’s search strategy. Librarians complete a critique of the strategy which is given to the Clerkship Director.

Results

Librarians compared the search results for the Class of 2008 from their PCM-1 and Clerkship assignments. Factors compared included the students’ ability to: identify key concepts in their search query, choose appropriate MeSH headings, use Explode, apply appropriate limits, and apply correct Boolean Logic.

Comparison of Success 1st year versus 3rd year



Conclusions

Two years after a hands-on class, our data suggests that students were still able to:

- Identify key concepts in their search query,
- Choose appropriate MeSH headings

However, students lost some skill in:

- Using Explode feature
- Applying appropriate limits
- Using correct Boolean Logic

As a result, we will evaluate our educational materials and focus on these features.