CASE STUDY: Northern Territory Health Antimicrobials Guideline

Refers to: NSQHS Standard 1 Governance and Standard 4 Medication Safety

Keywords: Medication Errors, Patient Safety, Clinical Governance

Context

The current Northern Territory Health (NT) Antimicrobials Guideline is hosted on the NT Health Library Service's digital repository platform (DSpace). The Guideline was developed by pharmacy staff and provides offline access to the NT restricted antimicrobials list and oral equivalence table.

Method

Pharmacy staff familiar with the NT Health Library digital repository platform approached the Library to explore whether this Guideline could be housed on DSpace. Library staff worked with both Pharmacy staff and the external DSpace support vendor, Prosentient Systems, to look at the feasibility of implementing the Guideline within DSpace. For the library this meant lots of liaising back and forth with Pharmacy, local IT departments and Prosentient Systems. Once feasibility was agreed, more testing occurred and tweaks were applied to ensure content displayed as required and that the ePublication would work correctly. If any changes are needed, Pharmacy staff alert the library staff, who update the content.

As the library already used DSpace for NT Health publications no extra funds were required to get the project off the ground – instead library staff time was invested. Though the content came from Pharmacy and they led the project, the library played a vital role in ensuring the resource was made publicly available to all staff 24/7 across all areas of NT Health. This therefore touches on NSQHS Standard 1 (Governance) as well as Standard 4 (Medication Safety).

Discussion

Throughout NT Health the Guideline is just seen as "business as usual". The majority of users wouldn't realise that it was hosted on a library based platform or that the library played a major role in enabling the Guideline's online presence. Pharmacy staff however, are grateful for NT Health Library involvement and the relationship between the Library and Pharmacy has strengthened and grown and further collaborative projects are being discussed.

At this stage statistics are not generated regarding hits or number of downloads but this may be investigated in the future. However the Antimicrobials Guideline has been well received and a second ePublication is in the works due for release soon.

Future development

The next stage of the pharmacy guidelines project is TEAMS– Top End Antimicrobial Stewardship. This resource is also hosted as an ePublication on the Library's digital platform. TEAMS provides automated approval of restricted antibiotics when used in accordance with the Department of Health Top End Health Service guidelines or the Australian Therapeutic Guidelines. It provides a free decision-support tool to help prescribers treat their patients according to best practice guidelines and the local antibiogram. The application asks a series of clinical questions to determine the most appropriate antimicrobial to treat an infection. It then gives approval for the most appropriate choice of antibiotic. It is designed either to augment an approval process which is already in place, or to serve as a standalone approval system at a smaller site.

Conclusion

The involvement of NT Heath Library in these projects demonstrates the variety of skills and services that libraries can offer to health services and departments to support the NSQHS Standards. It also highlights how innovative application of the concepts of health informatics and technologies of the information age can improve health care.