

Purpose or Problem Addressed

The UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center is the only major tertiary care pediatric medical service in Central Massachusetts. The center had over 43,500 patient visits in the year 2000.

Knowledge and information about a child's health condition is essential to a family's sense of control and active partnership in the care of the child. Focus groups about patient-centered care have demonstrated that parents want more information than they typically receive in an office visit about their child's illness and treatment options. Despite this need, health care providers have less and less time in the current managed care environment to spend educating their patients. The average office visit lasts only seven minutes. Patient retention and understanding is modest at best.

Rationale or Pertinence for Patient Education

The librarians and parents who staff the Library have special training in conducting medical reference interviews and locating quality resources. They have time to spend with the parents both in an initial session and in follow-up. Clinicians from the various pediatric specialties have recommended materials for the collection in the Library and Internet resources for use by the Library staff. This collaboration between pediatric specialists and trained resource experts has enhanced the patient education in the Children's Medical Center in several ways: the parents can be more active partners in the care of their children, and questions are answered using excellent resources that are selected to meet the individual information needs of each Library patron.

Description of the Intervention or Innovation and Barriers Involved

The Pediatric-Family Resource Library provides a point-of-care reference service and pediatric resources and materials for parents who bring their children to the UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center. The Library is located next to the pediatric clinic waiting area. Parents are able to ask medical librarians their questions and to borrow books and videotapes. Librarians and specially trained parents find information on specific health questions for patrons. Grant funds are used to pay the salaries of the trained parents and to purchase books, videotapes, and pamphlets. Internet access is available through the hospital's computer network, with access to over 1,800 full text online journals and medical databases through the medical school's library. Access to the consumer health programs and printed medical books and journals of the medical school library is also utilized. Parents benefit by getting the information they need to understand their children's illnesses and care for them.

In addition to primary care, specialty clinics in the Children's Medical Center include adolescent medicine, allergy, attention deficit disorder consultation, cardiology, child protection, developmental and behavioral pediatrics (6 distinct clinics), gastroenterology and nutrition, genetics, hematology/oncology, immunology, endocrinology, infectious disease, neurology, pulmonology and asthma, rheumatology, surgery, urology, orthopedics, and travel. Approximately 40 doctors serve the clinics. Many of the children seen in the clinics are chronically ill. The information needs of the parents of these children are complex, and library staff members are able to serve them as such needs evolve over time.

A series of previous projects attempted to address the information needs of our population; however, these projects were not successful. This Library benefited from

lessons learned in the previous projects and involved clinicians in the planning stages. One of the suggestions from a clinician early in the process was to involve parents of children seen in the clinics – this led to the development of the specially trained parents being part of the Library staff. The project also has the benefit of the resources available in an academic medical library.

Barriers to the success of the Library included scarcity of funds for patient education in the current health care environment. Additionally, physicians may be uncomfortable with the idea of other professionals providing information to their patients. Funding issues were overcome with a grant: this project is being funded through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners with funds from LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act), a Federal source of library funding. Physicians' concerns were addressed through the collaboration that was developed.

Summary of the Conclusions or Implications

A cost-effective point of care patient education service has been developed and provides patients with easy access to information and other resources. Collaboration among professionals and the involvement of the clinic population have been essential.

Description of How Information will be Presented Visually

The poster will use photographs, charts, written descriptions and examples of resource materials to illustrate the Library and its services. Handouts will be available detailing the critical points to consider should participants wish to develop a service such as this.