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How Clinical Experience May Enhance Liaison Success

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Purpose
The main purpose in preparing this was to reflect on my experiences and initiate investigation regarding how medical librarians with a history in a health profession perceive and utilize their clinical background. Examples are included that detail personal experiences. Summary of advantages and challenges of making a career transition from a health profession to medical librarianship also reflect what I located in the literature.

Mini Medical School
I have been participating in outreach efforts, in conjunction with the Hardin Library Simulation Lab and Hardin Library staff, to stimulate interest in health sciences professions for youth in the state of Iowa. These “tours” are coordinated through the Mini Medical School outreach program at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine.

Outreach to Clinicians
I work with residents to formulate PICO questions and facilitate small group searches. My background here allows me to follow the dialogue during case presentations. Knowing how to spell terminology during spontaneous searches is also a plus!

Is Clinical Background an Advantage? (my opinions and some others….)

Advantages
• History of communicating with medical professionals.
• Understanding and appreciating clinical culture, challenges to EBP, using EMR systems.
• Knowledge of medical terminology and understanding of subject matter, which may lend credibility and improve success with reference interview, literature search success, teaching, etc.
• General public service skills, of note is experience with patient care and communicating with individuals with disabilities.
• Comfort in clinical environment.
• Experience working under stressful conditions in fast-paced environments.
• Patrons and colleagues sometimes treat with more respect when they are aware of medical background.
• Professional relationships may already be developed, which can be a useful for getting involved with programs.

Challenges
• Perception that leaving a medical field is giving up or that something is wrong with the individual. Some clinicians feel they are abandoning their field.
• Accidental delivery of medical advice or opinions. Also, concern that information could be misinterpreted.
• Patrons could be intimidated by expertise (mentioned by physician career-changer). Patrons/colleagues may have other negative responses when learning of career change.
• Significant adaptation to very different work environment and culture, and different nature/demand of work.
• Loss of close connection with clinicians/patients.
• Expectations from colleagues and patrons may be higher for medical librarians with subject expertise and may not always be realistic.

References
http://www.medical.library.uiowa.edu/libraries/occupational santé/clinicalpractice/opinions.html

Pictured here are students testing patellar tendon reflex function. I have selected various tests of cognition, sensation, and motor function.

Testing for visual processing speed. Background information about the tests is provided as well as more specific information about areas of the nervous system that are generally responsible for successful completion of tests.

Performing a sensory test. Most of the students are engaged and they usually share a few laughs.

Family Medicine Rounds/Conference
Clinical Knowledge
Advanced Practice Institute
Professional Nursing Practice Committee

During this program, offered several times per year for advanced practice nurses, brief consultations are conducted. My background brings an appreciation of terminology, hospital/clinical culture and barriers to EBP.

I attend meeting and listen for policy and procedure updates that may require evidence support. Often times, there is need for a follow up meeting or correspondence. Understanding the clinical language and culture is of value.

http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/minimedicalschool/