

# Sowing the Seeds for Informationists to Help Tackle the Doctor Patient Ratio In India

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## ABSTRACT

### Background:

The doctor patient ratio in India is far lower than the need. Becoming a doctor is also ironically very tough. Those who do not get into medical schools settle for options often in completely different fields.

### Premise:

Becoming a Medical Informationist may be a very satisfying alternative and may also help tackle the problem of poor ratios.

### Methods:

We currently offer training programs to students, faculty and professionals in the health sciences for structured literature searching, referencing and medical writing. The student community loves this, and we get questions about "choosing such career options". However medical librarianship itself is unattractive to most and an Informationist is something that majority do not know anything about. We aim to create interest in this possibility amongst senior health professionals and governing bodies in the country. If the idea is welcomed, the next step is to create suitable University courses with a foundational health sciences component as well as the Information sciences component. Graduates will then be "Information Associates" to overworked doctors, helping them find updates and evidence and can also save them time, with very effective patient communication. In India this could be a very satisfying alternative career that also helps the health systems!

## BACKGROUND

### Doctor Patient Ratio [1]

India	USA
1:1700	1:350

- Inadequate medical schools / seats
- Difficulty in getting good medical teachers
- Population explosion

### Time to stay updated

- Very little
- No training in literature searching, to stay updated

Only one course on medical librarianship in the country: lacuna of trained medical librarians to help Librarianship – low option career

## OBJECTIVES

- To help tackle one aspect of the doctor – patient ratio problem: helping doctors to stay updated and also get the best evidence for patient management
  - Look for alternate solutions
  - Promote the aspect of information literacy and informationist as a specialization

## METHODS

Thinking out of the box!

- Create a new breed of Medical Informationists!
- Create a new course
  - Two years of basic medical sciences
  - Two years of information sciences
  - Or tweak it suitably

## ACTION POINTS

- Lay out a broad plan for the course
- Discuss it with University Librarians & Senior health professionals in the Govt / Ministry / any relevant setting
- Create necessary documentation - white papers to project plans
- All formal steps

## ADDITIONALLY

- Create job descriptions and person specifications
- Ensure availability of jobs with salaries that attract talent

## RESISTANCE?

- Will this work.....???
- "Out of the box has worked"
  - Training rural community women for home based neonatal care – reduced infant mortality by 70%[2]
- If it has worked in a real life and death situation, why not in the "Knowledge Domain", with fully qualified and trained workers?

## TO CONCLUDE

- There is a dire need for informationists to help health professionals stay updated especially when the provider : target ratio is poor
- Any new idea faces resistance
- Good planning and discussions are important
- Out of the box thinking is the need of the day for such problems

## References

1. Kothari R. Medical education in India: a need to think differently. Nat Med J India 2012;25:99-100
2. Bang AT. Home based neonatal care : summary and applications of the field trial in rural Gadchiroli, India (1993 to 2003). J. Perinatol. 2005;25: S108-22