

LITERARY HEALING: A NOVEL APPROACH TO HOSPITAL LIBRARY SERVICES

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Abstract: *The 19th-century revolution in libraries marked a profound shift from the ancient Greek and Roman model, where books were cherished treasures locked away in exclusive collections managed by a select few librarians. This transformative period ushered in an era where books were made accessible to the public, leading to a surge in individuals seeking knowledge from open library shelves. Hospital libraries, in particular, hold a unique position in the realm of information access, serving as vital resources for healthcare professionals. These libraries have long functioned as repositories and information hubs, critical for delivering high-quality patient care. The role of hospital librarians has evolved over time, expanding beyond the mere archiving of books and textbooks to encompass the development and maintenance of intricate information systems that grant access to diverse sources in various formats. Consequently, in addition to their pivotal role in educating medical, nursing, and administrative staff, hospital librarians also play a significant part in ensuring patients have access to pertinent information.*

Keywords: *Library Revolution, Public Access, Hospital Libraries, Information Access, Librarian Roles*

1.1 Introduction

The revolution in libraries took place shortly before the 19th century, changing a system from the age of the Greeks and Romans, when the books were treasures in previous centuries, located in inaccessible to the public collections managed by a few librarians [1]. With this revolution, books were placed for the first time in collections open to the public and the public is now flocking to the open shelves of a library, gaining access to unlimited content for every possible purpose, mainly informative and educational [1]. Hospital libraries in particular represent a special category of libraries and for the vast majority of health professionals are the most accessible source of information. [2].

For years hospital libraries have been functioning as repositories and access points for the knowledge required to provide high quality and documented patient care [3]. The role of the librarian in hospital libraries has changed from the past - a simple archivist of books and textbooks - to another role involving the creation and maintenance of complex information systems that provide access to different sources of information and in different formats [3]. Thus, in many cases, librarians in hospital libraries, in addition to the important role they play in the education and information of medical, nursing, administrative staff, also have an important role in the appropriate information of patients [3].

The hospital, as an organization, employs the doctor, the nurse, the intern doctor, the medical student, the nursing student, the administrative staff, the technical staff and of course hospitalizes the patients. Each hospital should have a system of libraries that serve all staff and of course the patients, not only in matters related to their professions but also to offer them recreational reading and general education.

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The patients, besides the possible physical burden due to an illness, are in an area that creates a significant psychological burden. To this point, libraries with the appropriate entertainment material are invited to contribute.

1.2 Problems in the creation of a joint hospital library

The problems encountered in developing such a library are huge, because there are differences in the objectives of each library, and even differences in the interests of the users that must be met. To develop such a system requires time, space, staff and above all a very large budget.

A medical and a nursing library can coexist and form a single library that serves the doctors and the nursing staff. Such an idea was presented by Kirsten Gerzysch, librarian of the Nursing School of Denmark. In her opinion, the medical literature can be useful to the nurse, and the nursing literature can sometimes be useful to the doctor. Also, it is good for each hospital to have a collection of topics that will help the technical and the administrative staff of the hospital with their jobs and in general with their informing.

There are difficulties in developing a library for patients. Various clubs in the past have done activities to create patient libraries in hospitals, though their efforts are not only noteworthy but also sporadic. Abroad, public libraries approached hospitals and so all the financial strength of hospitals was concentrated on the development of medical libraries. In Ohio, USA, for example, the Cleveland Public Library has been providing services to hospitals since 1922. This library has a special department that deals with the service of hospitals and other institutions. The management of all the hospitals in the state have jointly taken care of their libraries to serve both the doctor and the rest of the staff and patients [4].

The public library serves the need of every citizen for education, information and research. Users of the public library are all the inhabitants of an area, thus including many categories of users, people of any social class, age, education and race. The library aims at the inclusion of the individual actively in the society, trying to approach it in every way. Books, magazines, newspapers are some of the means of access that should be made accessible to more people. So are the various cultural events that the public library offers to its users. However, there are people who are unable or have difficulty accessing the library; It is the case of people living in remote areas, the elderly, the disabled, the prisoners, the patients in hospitals. The public library tries to approach them. Here is the meeting point, the point where the paths of the public library and the hospital library meet.

1.3 Collaboration of a public library with a hospital library

The patient is a person who is in a difficult mental and physical condition, confined to a specific space, in need of escape and entertainment. There are different types of patients, from the child with Mediterranean anemia, leukemia, who is forced to stay in the hospital for months, even years, to the patient who does some tests for a day or two. A public library approaching this part of society, not only fulfills a social purpose but spreads the love of books. A pleasant book in difficult days can be the beginning for further reading and finally a real love for the books. The public library can approach the hospital in several ways:

- With a mobile library.
- With a collection borrowed to the hospital library.
- With cultural events aimed at patients, especially children.

Mobile libraries are the best way for public libraries to approach hospitals. But in order to achieve this solution, there must be close collaboration among the libraries that exist in each hospital.

The collaboration between the public and the hospital library should start with the following in mind:

1. Selection of collections, according to the type of patients.
2. Material care.
3. Ensuring the content of the public library.

Generally, the collection should include a pleasant content, literature, modern magazines, even newspapers. Children's collections for pediatric clinics, even schoolbooks, that will help these children fill the gaps created by their absence from school. There is a big problem here for the children who stay in the hospital for a long time. The public library with its great experience in the selection of content would have no problem in the selection of these collections. The difficulty is encountered in choosing the collection for patients with psychological problems. In this case, the selection of the collection could be made in collaboration with doctors who deal with the matter. Here we must refer to bibliotherapy, i.e. the help that the reading of certain books offers to the patient with psychological problems. In addition, a public library (in whatever form it operates, e.g. as a mobile library) does not have the opportunity to visit a hospital on a daily basis, and again in collaboration with the hospital library and the hospital authorities, certain measures should be taken to ensure the content, because patient handling is daily.

Finally, the development of a hospital library collection is a serious and difficult responsibility for the responsible librarian. In order for the librarian to compile a collection that will meet the needs of all members of the community, without useless material, he must create a material selection policy based on the human right to be educated, to enrich his knowledge, to make creative use of his free time, as well as the goals of the library. Those who are responsible for the selection of material must defend, through the right choices, the human right to read, see and hear what is needed. After all, this is also a divine law for libraries, acting as carriers of intellectual and economic development.

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