

Chapter 3

Knowledge Management and the Medical Health Librarians: A Perception Study

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management can make healthcare organizations to become more collaborative, transparent, and proactive. If implemented well, it can change the health care delivery system over the next few decades into a more economical, error-averse, and responsible public resource. This study focused on the roles of medical head librarians in the knowledge management programs of the seven (7) selected tertiary hospitals in the Philippines (The Medical City, Makati Medical Center, Far Eastern University - Nicanor Reyes Medical Foundation, St. Luke's Medical Center, Fatima University Medical Center, Iloilo Doctors' College for the Iloilo Doctors' Hospital, and the University of Perpetual Help-Dr. Jose G. Tamayo Medical Center). The data gathered from survey questionnaires and interview showed that medical head librarians from the selected private tertiary hospitals in the Philippines do have roles in the knowledge management programs of their organizations. These roles can be a leader role, a key role, or a non-key role.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management can make healthcare organizations become effective in collaboration and transparency. If implemented well, it can transform the health care delivery system into a more cost-effective, error-averse, and accountable public resource (Guptill, 2005). Knowledge management (KM) includes the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge in an organization (Newman, 1991). According to Ajiferuke (2003), “knowledge management involves the management of explicit knowledge (i.e., knowledge that has been codified in documents, databases, web pages, etc.) and the provision of an enabling environment for the development, nurturing, utilization, and sharing of employees’ tacit knowledge (i.e., know-how, skills, or expertise)” (p. 247). There are three aspects of knowledge management: techno-centric, which focuses on technology that enhances knowledge creation and sharing; organizational, which focuses on how an organization can be designed to facilitate knowledge processes; and ecological, which focuses on the interaction of people, identity, knowledge, and environmental factors (Binamira, 2010). In any industry, this means turning personal knowledge into organizational knowledge as it becomes widely shared by the whole organization. This shared knowledge should be properly used to help the organization meet its goals and targets. Generally, the creation and transfer of knowledge across the organization play an important role in the organization’s success and competitiveness (Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). As Heisig & Vorbeck (2001) said, proper implementation of a knowledge management program in an organization could improve the customer services and operational processes; develop new products; and introduce new ideas to the industry. Most likely, those products of information technology, like intranets, web portals, and groupware, facilitate the sharing of knowledge among the workers in an organization because of their capabilities in the access and enhancement of the speed of knowledge transfer (Ajiferuke, 2003).

In most organizations, professionals who usually exercise knowledge management strategies are the human resource managers, process and product developers, and information technologists (Taylor, 1996). However, in the fields of library and information science, there has been an increasing interest in knowledge management activities for information professionals. As enumerated by Ajiferuke (2003), “this is evident in the various articles that have discussed the roles of information professionals in the knowledge management process (Albert, 1998; Balcombe, 1999; Broadbent, 1998; Duffy, 2000; Marshall, 1997; Milne, 2000; Ponelis & Fairer-Wessels, 1998; Schwarwalder, 1999; Yeh, 2000). Other cases that signify the inclusion of knowledge management in the interest of library and information science are the following: special issues of professional journals have been devoted to knowledge management issues; a book on knowledge management for the information professional

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