

Use of Scientific Information Resources among Medical and Dental Students in the University of Helsinki

Matti Aarnio and Kalle Romanov

Aims

The aim of the study was to survey how original resources of scientific information are utilized by medical and dental students in the Medical Faculty of the University of Helsinki.

Methods

The data were collected in November 2004 by using electronic self assessment questionnaire via electronic form, which contained both multiple choice and open ended questions. The survey was addressed to 924 students, of which 418 (45.2%) responded to it during the survey period of two weeks.

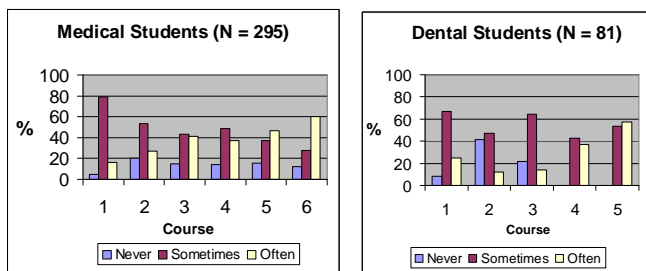
General Computer Use Among Medical and Dental Students

- 79% of the medical and dental students have a cable Internet connection at home.
- 34% use home computer for studying four or more hours / week
- 25% use campus computers for studying four or more hours / week

MEDLINE Database

MEDLINE is the largest source for information from the biomedical journal literature with over 12 million references. Over 4,300 selected journals from 1966 to date are covered. MEDLINE can thus be considered as a primary channel to scientific information resources for medical and dental students.

Use of MEDLINE Database



§Sometimes = one to seven times a year
§Often = twice a month or more often

Purpose of Using MEDLINE

Medical Students

Course	1	2	3	4	5	6
Does not use	5%	20%	13%	14%	13%	8%
Uses only for Studying	69%	43%	25%	16%	26%	13%
Uses only for Research	0%	2%	6%	19%	0%	5%
Uses for both Studying/Research	26%	35%	56%	51%	61%	74%
N	65	60	52	43	31	38

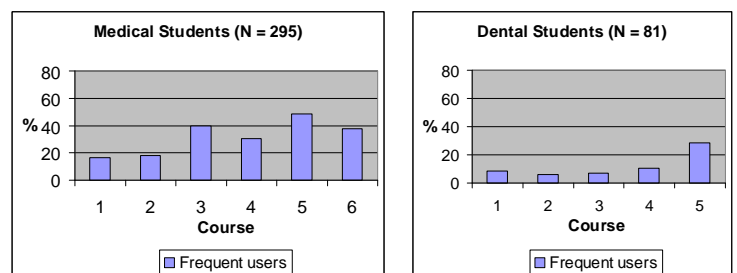
Dental Students

Course	1	2	3	4	5
Does not use	9%	41%	21%	0%	14%
Uses only for Studying	65%	35%	36%	26%	0%
Uses only for Research	0%	0%	7%	8%	0%
Uses for both Studying/Research	26%	24%	36%	68%	86%
N	23	17	14	19	7

The Use of Fulltext Articles

MEDLINE is a primary source for biomedical journal literature. However, using MEDLINE does not mean that the articles are also read. The students may just search the articles and skim through the abstracts without reading up on the fulltext articles. Hence, we also asked how many of the students actually use the fulltext articles for their studies or research.

Proportion of Frequent Fulltext Article Users



§Frequent user reads fulltext articles twice a month or more often

Conclusions

These results indicate that the use of scientific information resources among medical and dental students increases towards the end of their studies.

This outcome may be explained by the fact that the students are doing more independent work (e.g. theses) at the end of their studies. During the latter half of the studies the students also need more intensive clinical perspective of various topics, which is attained by clinical training and reading articles of clinical research. Another explanation for the outcome is that the students become more familiar with the use of biomedical information sources during their years of study.

Though MEDLINE is relatively commonly used in the faculty, the results show that fulltext articles are not used as often as their references and abstracts are searched from MEDLINE. Thus, in order to support the use of primary scientific information resources the use of fulltext articles should be encouraged in the curriculum of the medical faculty. Additionally, the skills of students to read and utilize these texts should be improved with a revised training program of this topic.