Cancer Patients’ Perceptions and Expectations of Health and Medical Information Service in Japan’s Public Libraries

by
Makiko MIWA, Nozomi IKEYA, Shunsaku TAMURA, Chie SUGA, Chikako YAMAKI, Tomoko TAKAYAMA, Mika KOSHIZUKA

Background
- 2007: The Cancer Control Act: central and local governments are require to take necessary measures to collect and offer information on cancer treatment and extend advice to patients and their family.
- Recommended Model: shared decision-making between medical professionals and patients for increasing patient autonomy.
- Public libraries become one of the local access points for health and medical information.
- 24% of public libraries set up a section for health and medical information.

Purpose
- Identify methods of improving public library health and medical information services.

Method
- Participants: Patient-Civil Panel Members (The Center for Cancer Control and Information Services of the National Cancer Center)

Results
- Eleven out of eighteen participants used their public library to seek information.

Suggestions from Participants
Public libraries should:
- Actively promote health and medical information services to penetrate patients,
- Provide an option for borrowing books without human interaction,
- Develop a strict acquisition policy to offer only reliable and up-to-date medical books,
- Collect free booklets and brochures to provide up-to-date medical information,
- Add e-books to medical book collections,
- Provide access to information on rare cancers,
- Arrange books on shelves so that they are readily locatable by users,
- Predict users’ future needs and navigate them to potential information sources,
- Collaborate with hospital libraries to support reference and referral services,
- Help improve the health literacy of local people, and
- Expand inter-library collaboration to improve access to medical books and information for patients living in rural areas.

*Some public libraries have already implemented the full range of medical information services suggested above (See Pictures)