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Are We Dreaming or Doing? How Health Science Graduates Access Information in their Professional Lives

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Are we dreaming or doing?

How health science graduates access information in their professional lives

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Why?

We wanted to know if our health sciences and nursing graduates' experiences at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) prepared them to find, evaluate, and apply information to their clinical practice and patient education needs. While we were most interested in the library's impact, we wanted to know where they learned search skills and which resources they use most frequently as health care professionals.

Who?

Alumni of the following programs were surveyed:

- athletic training (BS)
- nursing (BSN, MSN, and DNP)
- physical therapy (DPT)
- physician assistant studies (MPAS)

How?

- In consultation with our university's statistical consulting center, we created an anonymous survey using SurveyMonkey®. The survey contained quantitative, qualitative, and open ended questions.
- The project was reviewed by GVSU's Human Research Review Committee and qualified for exempt status.
- In November 2016, emails were sent to 3529 alumni of several GVSU health sciences and nursing programs.
- The first question asked respondents to indicate if they were currently working in a health care related field. Only those responding affirmatively could continue the survey.
- Reminders to take the survey were sent following Thanksgiving 2016. The survey closed in early December 2016, and 451 valid responses were received.
- Survey responses are still undergoing analysis. Preliminary results from quantitative data show that while library instruction, guides, and consultation are significant, most graduates credit their instructors as the most important source of learning research skills.

92%

of all survey respondents indicated their experiences at GVSU had prepared them for finding information in their professional practice.

87% stated that they felt confident applying information to their practice.

89%

stated they felt confident evaluating information.

"Learn how to evaluate your sources. The best ways to find information will probably change over time as new technologies become available, but it will always be important to understand what you're reading and how well it applies to your situation."

What advice would you give to students in your field regarding finding and using information while in school?

"The librarians are extremely helpful ... professors can also help, but they usually know less than the librarians when it comes to finding information ..."

"Pay attention ... this is one of the skills that will allow you to become a lifelong learner and continue to advance your knowledge and practice after graduation."

What is one thing you wish you had learned at GVSU that would have helped you find and use information?

"I wish there had been more introduction of different resources available. I feel like I continually utilize the same sources of information because I don't know how to use others."

"Learn how to effectively use and find free (non-employer or university based) literature."

"More library instruction during class sessions."

"How to be better at a narrowed search ..."

Most frequently used resources

- PubMed
 - Other*
 - UpToDate
 - CINAHL
 - Discipline-specific websites**
- Primary reasons for selecting these resources were currency, ease of use, and accuracy.

*Other includes, but is not limited to, live seminars, Mayo Clinic, the Center for Disease Control, hospital policies and procedures.

**Discipline-specific websites include, but is not limited to, association websites such as the American Physical Therapy Association, American Alliance of Critical Care Nurses, American Heart Association.

What is one thing you learned at GVSU that has helped you find and use information pertaining to your professional practice?

"How to filter through research articles to find relevant information, and a systematic approach to learning to apply that knowledge to appropriate patients."

From whom did you learn information research skills?

- The reported influence of formal library instruction varied greatly by discipline, ranging from 29% (athletic training) to 68% (nursing doctorate).
- The reported influence of library guides ranged from 12% (physical therapy masters and physician assistant studies) to 33% (nursing doctorate).
- The reported influence of meeting with librarians ranged from 3% (physical therapy doctorate) to 28% (nursing doctorate).

"As a practicing RN I found evidence based practice to be the best way to improve healthcare. Learning how and where to find accurate research articles about it was a very helpful thing that I learned from GVSU."

"GVSU taught me how to search for research that is both current and relevant to clinical practice. I am confident in my ability to differentiate between reliable sources and non-scholarly authors. As a result, I am able to apply the concepts that I have learned through research to clinical practice and overall improve patient outcomes."