Information Literacy for Evidence-Based Practice: Creating a Self-Paced Online Course

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ABSTRACT
Distance students are often at the disadvantage of not receiving the same interactive information literacy instruction as their on-campus counterparts. The University of St. Augustine library, which supports four completely online degree programs in addition to campus-based programs, created a one credit, self-paced, online course called Information Literacy for Evidence-Based Practice in order to better reach our distance students. Though evidence-based practice (EBP) is a popular concept, studies show that many practitioners are not actually doing it. One reason the practitioners themselves cite is lack of skill in searching the literature. The goal of the credit-course is to help our students learn the skills necessary for using EBP throughout their careers. The online, self-paced delivery of the course ensures that distance students have access to information literacy instruction in a convenient format and on a familiar platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Throughout the physical therapy and occupational therapy literature, studies show that practitioners are familiar with evidence-based practice (EBP), but lack the skills, time, and access to evidence to make effective use of EBP (Bennhardsson, 2013; Salti, 2009; Ies, 2006; Mahler, 2004). Learning these skills should begin in school. Librarians throughout higher education are using various means of teaching information literacy (IL) to students, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some of these methods are general, and some focus on specific disciplines, such as health sciences (Durando, 2005). Some IL programs for health sciences students focus on linking the concepts of EBP with those of IL, such as the one described by Boruff and Thomas (2011), which showed the success of integrating IL in teaching physical and occupational therapy students EBP principles. At the same time, teaching IL skills in an online format within a course has become standard for most institutions (Kumar, 2012; Robertson, 2009; Schimming, 2008; Jacobs, 2007). The literature also reflects that stand-alone, credit-bearing IL courses are often successful, especially when they are directly linked to a specific academic discipline (Burke, 2012; Daugherty, 2011). The IL for EBP course at the University of St. Augustine combines each of these factors (linking IL with EBP, specific to health sciences students, taught online, and taken for academic credit) with the end goal of helping students, and consequently practitioners, become more efficient with EBP.

METHODS
The IL for EBP course at the University of St. Augustine is a one credit, self-paced online course, hosted on Jenzabar’s eLearning learning management system. It is currently open to students in the distance education programs at the university, specifically the transitional doctor of physical therapy (IDPT) program, transitional doctor of occupational therapy (TODT) program, doctor of health sciences (DHSc) program, and the doctor of education (EdD) program. The course is also open to faculty members at the university. Students within the course complete four units of content (including reading text, watching videos, and completing tutorials) at their own pace and complete a total of nine assignments—four hands-on assignments and five discussion based “bulletin board” assignments. The course is paced to allow students to work at their own pace and complete a total of nine assignments. Satisfactory completion is based on how well the students follow directions for an assignment, complete all the requirements of an assignment, and demonstrate understanding of the topic assessed in the assignment. Students who do not satisfactorily complete an assignment on the first try can attempt the assignment again with the instructor’s feedback. Upon completion, students are asked to fill out an online evaluation of the course.

RESULTS
Though this is an ongoing project, so far two students have successfully passed the University of St. Augustine’s Information Literacy for Evidence-Based Practice course. Two more students are currently enrolled and have completed several assignments. Student feedback has been very positive, with some constructive criticism leading to changes within the course, including clarifying instructions on the PubMed Assignment and the ProQuestIntoTrac Assignment. We will continue to evaluate student learning and the impact of this course as more students complete it.

Figure 1 Examples of student answers to “bulletin board” questions

Student Quotations
“I am enjoying the course. It is well organized and the videos are great.”

“Thank you for being so receptive to questions. I was feeling very frustrated. Its really hard to be doing this in isolation and not just be able to ask someone to come over and have a look at the screen to help you sort out why you are getting stuck right at the time its happening.”

“I am learning alot and having fun I really did like research and writing when I was in college and it so amazing to be able to look at so much so easily.”

“I think all new OTD students should be encouraged to take the course! Unless a student has had previous exposure to searching databases and navigating the USA library, I think your course is a must.”

“I have started my Science of Occupation course, and I am SO glad I finished this course first. I feel so much more confident in my abilities to gather evidenced based information am excited to use my new skills!”

Figure 2 IL for EBP course home page on Jenzabar’s eLearning system

Table 1 EBP and IL Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EBP Steps</th>
<th>IL Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form a research question</td>
<td>Determine the purpose and by the information needed (Standard 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for evidence</td>
<td>Access needed information effectively and efficiently (Standard 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critically analyze the evidence</td>
<td>Evaluate information and its sources critically (Standard 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate the evidence</td>
<td>Incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system (Standard 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the outcomes</td>
<td>Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose (Standard 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseminate and communicate knowledge</td>
<td>Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose (Standard 5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
