

Health libraries week 2005



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With the second annual Health Libraries Week on the horizon, Catherine Ebenezer offers a reminder of the wide range of library services and resources available to health professionals.

The National Library for Health (NLH) is a library and information service for the NHS, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It offers a range of services to support patient care, staff development and research. The library mixes traditional services, such as professional support from NHS library staff, with web-based services including a comprehensive search engine, clinical question answering and awareness services. Work is under way to link and develop existing local NHS library resources, both electronic and traditional. To access the NLH's web resource, please visit: www.library.nhs.uk

This year, 14 to 18 November sees the second annual Health Libraries Week, coordinated by the NLH. The aim of the week is to raise the profile of health library services, and increase awareness of the range of library and information services and resources available to those working in health care in England.

You may or may not be aware that health library facilities – including the College's own library – offer a wide range of services. These include help and advice from skilled staff, journal and book collections (electronic as well as paper), study space with internet access, training courses, awareness services, search services and document delivery. These are all designed to help busy midwives and other health professionals find the best available evidence about healthcare matters as quickly as possible, to support both their clinical practice and their professional development.

In addition to the personal services within local libraries, the NLH website is available to all NHS staff in England, allowing access to information at a time and place that is convenient to them. The NLH website offers a range of specialist libraries that identify the best evidence on a range of the major healthcare topics. These include women's health, child health, screening,

clinical genetics, diabetes, mental health, health services management and knowledge management. It also includes links to high-quality evidence sources such as the Cochrane Library and the *British Medical Journal's Clinical evidence*.

NHS staff can also access bibliographic databases such as MEDLINE and CINAHL through the NLH website, as well as over 1500 full-text journals and a collection of electronic books, via an NHS ATHENS account. This is available through your local NHS library or via the NLH website itself. The site offers a search

engine that searches by default the guidelines database, evidence sources and patient information sources. If you log in using your NHS ATHENS account through the NLH website, then the National Core Content collection of journals and books is added to the resources

searched. It also offers a clinical guidelines database, a question answering service aimed at staff working in primary care (this has a women's health section) and news and current awareness services.

Changes are also taking place to the old National electronic Library for Health (NeLH) website. Work is under way on migrating content from this site to the NLH website and this will continue throughout the first half of 2006. Some resources will be incorporated into a relevant specialist library, some will be replaced by new services and some will change in nature as they are migrated into the NLH website. To access the existing NeLH website, please visit: www.nelh.nhs.uk

There will be various events taking place in and around health libraries up and down the country during Health Libraries Week. Midwives are being encouraged to take the opportunity to contact their local library and see what they have to offer and how they can make best use of their services to support maternity care.



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