

# Medical Library Association Consumer and Patient Health Information Section

**CAPHIS** consumer and patient health information section

**MLA CAPHIS**  
caphis.mlanet.org



## Purpose of CAPHIS

- To provide a forum for librarians in the area of consumer health information
- To encourage leadership among librarians in the area of consumer health information
- To promote the education of librarians in the provision of consumer health information
- Encourage the development of standards for the provision of consumer health information

## About CAPHIS

CAPHIS, the Consumer and Patient Health Information Section, is a section of the Medical Library Association, an association of health information professionals with more than 5,000 individual and institution members.

MLA fosters excellence in the professional achievement and leadership of health sciences library and information professionals to enhance the quality of health care, education, and research.

## Membership Guidelines

Annual fee  
Must be a member of MLA to be a member of CAPHIS



A consumer health library of today

## History of CAPHIS

The Consumer and Patient Health Information Section (CAPHIS) of the Medical Library Association was formed as a provisional section at the Montreal MLA annual meeting in 1981. It was formally recognized by MLA in 1986. Katherine Lindner was the first official CAPHIS chair.

The first issue of the section newsletter, CAPHIS Connections, was produced (on a typewriter) in the fall of 1984. The CAPHIS web site was first launched in 1996, and the listserv in 1997.

## Unique Projects

- Consumer Connections Newsletter
- Managing a Consumer Health Information Service
- Top 100 List
- National Consumer Health Library Directory

## Key Publication

### The librarian's role in the provision of consumer health information and patient education

Policy Statement by the Medical Library Association and the Consumer and Patient Health Information Section (CAPHIS/MLA)

Health librarians, because of their knowledge of and skills in the identification, selection, organization, and dissemination of information, play an important role in both consumer health information services and patient education. The role of the librarian differs depending on the mission and policies of the organization. Librarians' activities in this area are oriented towards the goals of producing a healthy society and assisting the individual in making informed health decisions. This policy statement, approved by the Board of Directors of the Medical Library Association, was developed by the Consumer and Patient Health Information Section. It covers MLA policy, defines consumer health information and patient education, and identifies potential roles for librarians in these two areas.

#### DEFINITIONS

Consumer health information (CHI) is information on health and medical topics provided in response to requests from the general public, including patients and their families. In addition to information on the symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, CHI encompasses information on health promotion, preventive medicine, the determinants of health, and accessing the health care system.

Patient education is a planned activity, initiated by a health professional whose aim is to impart knowledge, attitudes, and skills, with the specific goal of changing behavior, increasing compliance with therapy and, thereby, improving health.

CHI and patient education overlap in practice, since patient behavior may change as a result of receiving health information materials. Patient education and CHI often differ in terms of the setting in which the process occurs, rather than in terms of the subject matter.

#### ROLES FOR THE LIBRARIAN IN CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION AND PATIENT EDUCATION

**Collection management**

- Identifying available CHI and patient education materials for review and possible purchase.
- Selecting CHI and patient education materials for the organization including books, magazines, audiovisuals, pamphlets, computer databases, CD-ROMs, and Internet resources.

- Building an authoritative collection of CHI and patient education materials in print and electronic form that meets the needs of the institution or community being served.
- Developing subject file collections on current topics of interest to consumers, etc.
- Maintaining a current collection of CHI and patient education materials which are routinely reevaluated and revised.

#### Knowledge and resource sharing

- Networking with other individuals, organizations, and agencies to facilitate resource-sharing of CHI and patient education materials.
- Consulting on the identification, selection, and organization of patient education materials in health care settings, e.g. hospital nursing units, ambulatory clinics, etc.
- Serving on institutional committees that address topics such as patient education, public health, community health education, quality assurance, medical ethics, etc. to encourage and support the development of CHI and patient education resources.
- Working with the institution and the community to develop informational and educational programs related to health issues, e.g. weight control, living wills, etc. The librarian often plays a special role in identifying materials, locating speakers, etc.
- Alerting health educators to areas of concern to the public for future program development.
- Acting as a resource for health professionals who wish to develop consumer health and patient education resources in their practice settings.
- Sharing the results of their CHI and patient education experience with other professionals, both in the library field and outside, in order to improve these services.
- Supporting and encouraging the development of self-help groups by providing resources, making referrals to facilitate networking, and suggesting names of contact persons for programs, etc.
- In cases in which the institution has a patient education program, working as a member of the interdisciplinary team to meet the informational needs of the program.

#### Advocacy

- Acting as advocates on the local, national, and international levels to promote open access to health information for the public.
- Protecting the individual's right to confidentiality and unrestricted access to medical and health information. The MLA Code of Ethics for Health Sciences Librarianship, ALA Administrative Policies and Pro-

"The librarian's role in the provision of consumer health information and patient education."  
*Bull Med Libr Assoc* 84.2 (1996): 238.

## Memories

CAPHIS 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake



Janet Schneider honored with the Consumer Health Librarian of the Year award at MLA'12



Ysabel Bertolucci and Tammy Mays in Hawai'i at MLA'09



Andrea Keynon receives first CAPHIS Award at MLA'07  
From Naomi Broering



## Leadership Opportunities

CAPHIS officers include the Chair, Chair-Elect, Immediate-Past Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Most officers serve for one or two years.

The Chair presides over all meetings and represents the Section. She or he appoints committee chairs and prepares reports on CAPHIS activities for MLA.

The Chair-Elect has primary responsibility for planning the Section programming at the annual meeting and serves as Chair when the Chair is unavailable.

The Immediate-Past Chair represents the Section at MLA Section Council. He or she also chairs the CAPHIS Nominating Committee and prepares for election of new officers.

The Secretary is responsible for recording minutes of all meetings.

The Treasurer keeps track of CAPHIS finances and accounts, writes checks on behalf of the Section, and prepares the annual Section budget.

## CAPHIS Awards

There are two CAPHIS awards:

### CAPHIS Professional Development Award

Need funding to continue your professional development as a consumer health librarian?

Apply for this award before April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year!  
You should be a CAPHIS member in good standing with at least 2 years experience in consumer health librarianship.

### CAPHIS Consumer Health Librarian of the Year Award

Nominate an exemplary consumer health librarian colleague for this prestigious honor from CAPHIS!

Nominations and accompanying documents (CV and letters of recommendation) should be submitted no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

The recipient is acknowledged at the CAPHIS Business Meeting at MLA.

Details are available on the CAPHIS web site