

Taking the “ICK” out of Medical & Health Reference

KENTUCKY DEPT. FOR LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES

January 26, 2017

ERIKA FISCHER, MLIS

Southeast Clinical Campus Librarian

University of North Dakota, School of Medicine & Health Sciences



Developed resources reported in this presentation are supported by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH) under cooperative agreement number 1UG4LM012346-01. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.



“Health information inquiries account for as many as 60% of the total reference inquiries at public libraries.”

L Luo & V.T. Park, “Preparing public librarians for consumer health information service: A nationwide study,” *Library & Information Science Research* 35, no. 4 (2013): 2.

What makes these questions tricky?

The library user...

- feels uncomfortable. (Or maybe confused, sad, angry, etc...)
- isn't able to articulate the question (doesn't know / understand the terminology, doesn't lead with the *real* question, etc.).

YOU (the librarian)...

- feel uncomfortable.
- don't know what questions to ask.
- don't know where to find information to answer the question.
- don't know how much to tell the person.

The library user feels uncomfortable.

- Have an open mind and provide a welcoming, safe environment.
- Be aware of your body language - open, confident, patient.
- If possible, provide a private setting for the reference interview.
- Be aware of the person asking the question, but do not assume that they are the person with the health question.

The library user isn't able to articulate.

- Use active listening to verify you understand information need.
- Use a medical dictionary to define unfamiliar medical terminology.
- Help the person break down a broad question (e.g. “everything on diabetes”) into manageable narrower topics.
- Understand that the initial question posed may not be the question for which an answer is sought.

You feel uncomfortable.

- Increase knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate interactions.
- Understand beliefs, customs, and values of cultural and ethnic groups within your community.
- If personal beliefs interfere with your ability to remain objective, refer the question to another librarian or appropriate agency.

You don't know what questions to ask.

- Determine what the person already knows about the subject. What sources has he or she already consulted?
 - Help the person evaluate this information for bias and reliability.
- Use open-ended, neutral questions to get as much information as possible and listen carefully without interrupting. Share your reason(s) for asking so person understands you are not prying.

You don't know where to find the information.

- The National Library of Medicine, the National Institute of Health, and various health organizations provide high quality information at no cost.
 - Many of these resources are geared to specific age groups or reading levels and are available in multiple languages.
 - You may also have an option to provide the information in the form of a multimedia resources.
- There may be **local** organizations and agencies in your community that provide health information.
- It is **always appropriate** to refer the person back his or her health care provider (physician, pharmacist, etc.).

You don't know how much to tell the person.

- Provide the most complete answer you can find but do not overwhelm.
- Provide the best answer you can find, recognizing that there may be limitations (current information not available, disagreement among health professionals, etc.).
- Be careful when recommending information sources - explain what information is included instead of recommending a “best” source.
- “Bad news” should not be censored by the librarian, but be sensitive.
- Although teens (and children) may ask questions that are beyond parental and/or librarian comfort levels, information should not be censored by the librarian.
- Always point out source of information and encourage the person to critically evaluate information.

Librarians are not health professionals.

People may assume that you can provide advice. **Do not attempt to interpret medical information, provide a diagnosis, or recommend a therapy or intervention.**

- Emphasize that you are an information professional, not a health professional.
- Avoid agreeing or disagreeing with what the person expresses.
- Do not offer your own experiences or hearsay about similar medical conditions.

To the...

<http://libguides.und.edu/findinggoodhealthinfo>



Photo by James Cridland
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/jamescridland/>

Scenarios

I went to the doctor with my dad last week. He was diagnosed with CAD (coronary something?) and hyper-lip something? The doctor wants him to undergo surgery, but I'm wondering what his options are.

Scenarios

My 8 year-old son has just been diagnosed with diabetes. I don't really know anything about kids getting diabetes. I also want to know where to find information that he can read himself.

Scenarios

My friend said she has been going to reiki sessions for her anxiety. What is reiki and how does it work?

Scenarios

My doctor said something about a “bubble abrasion.” What is that? I didn’t really understand what he said.

Scenarios

My son has been diagnosed with ADHD and his therapist recommended medication. What are our options?

Scenarios

I've been having some pain in my hand, and my friend thinks it's arthritis. I want to read about arthritis before I see my doctor.

Resources Shared

MedlinePlus

National Center for Complementary & Integrative Health

Health Reach (site with resources in multiple languages)

Herbs at a Glance

Pill Box

KidsHealth

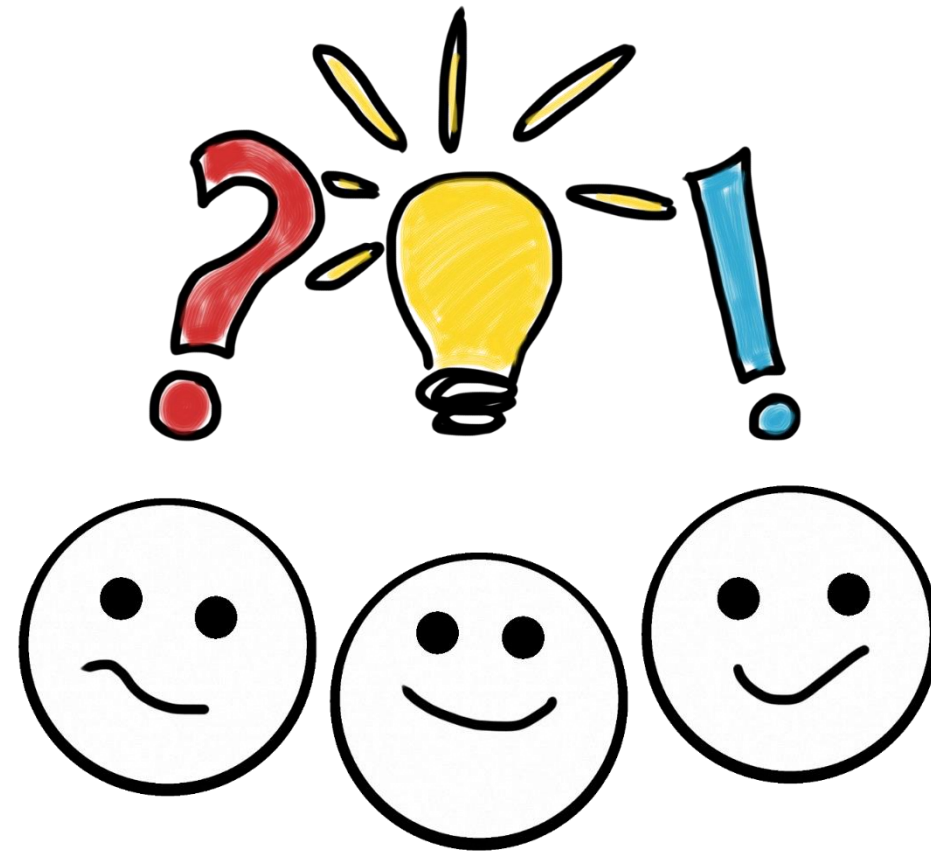
TeensHealth

girls.gov

NIH SeniorHealth

Learn More...

- **National Network of Libraries of Medicine**
The Consumer Health Reference Interview and Ethical Issues
<https://nnlm.gov/outreach/consumer/ethics.html>
- **American Library Association, Reference and User Services Association**
Health and Medical Reference Guidelines
<http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/guidelinesmedical>
- **Finding Health and Wellness @ the Library: A Consumer Health Toolkit for Library Staff, 2nd edition**
<http://www.library.ca.gov/lds/docs/healthtoolkit.pdf>



Erika Fischer

Clinical Campus Librarian
University of North Dakota,
School of Medicine & Health Sciences

erika.fischer@med.und.edu
701.293.4173

thank you!

This webinar was made possible
in part by the



INSTITUTE *of*
Museum and **Library**
SERVICES

Thank you!

Erika Fischer

Clinical Campus Librarian

University of North Dakota

erika.fischer@med.und.edu

701-293-4173

KDLA.Certification@ky.gov

[CE Events Calendar](#)

[Archived Webinars](#)



[@KDLALibDev](https://twitter.com/KDLALibDev)



facebook.com/KDLACE