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***Development and validation of competencies for medical librarians in Pakistan.***  
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Medical librarian's work is becoming increasingly complex offering new challenges and opportunities due to constant change in the nature of health information and the needs of health professionals. It is the quality of library staff that determines the services of the library. Therefore, it is imperative for medical librarians to reshape themselves by identifying the requisite competencies to meet the information needs of medical professionals. Considerable work, beginning with the King report (1986) has been done to identify competencies required by information professionals in general and to forecast those that will be needed to equip them for change. The literature available at this time does not adequately deal with the issue related to medical librarians. The present study was planned to bridge that gap.

The objective of this study was to identify competencies for librarians working in the medical libraries of Pakistan and to validate these based on the perceptions of head librarians and library coordinators of these libraries. The survey method was used to achieve the objectives of this study. A structured questionnaire, listing needed competencies, was prepared based on the literature presently available. The list was reviewed by a panel of experts for content validation. It was pilot-tested on a group of head librarians and library coordinators who were not part of the sample. A 5-point Likert scale was used for validation of competencies. The questionnaire, based on 84 competency statements covering eight areas, was distributed among the head librarians and library coordinators in 115 medical libraries. The study is based on the response of 67 (58%) head librarians and 63 (55%) library coordinators. Relevant descriptive and inferential statistics have been used for data analysis using SPSS.

The research results showed some differences between head librarians and library coordinators and different experience groups of head librarians in term of importance level for some competency statements. Of the 83 competency statements validated by the head librarians, 44 got four or higher mean score while the other 39 statements got mean scores in the range of 3.97 and 3.06. The library coordinators validated 80 statements. Four competency statements "Familiarity with various health and health related associations and organizations" (mean, 2.97), "Web-page/portal designing and maintenance skills" (mean, 2.90), "Knowledge of health care ethics and medico-legal issues" (mean, 2.78) and "Sense of humor" (mean, 2.70) were not validated by them. Only 27 competency statements got 4 or higher mean score from library coordinators while the other 53 statements got mean scores in the range of 3.97 and 3.22. Top three competency statements in the opinion of head librarians were: "Knowledge and understanding of Internet for library use" (mean, 4.58), "Eager to learn new skills" (mean, 4.57) and "Knowledge of bibliographic tools, selection aids, and acquisition of materials" (mean, 4.55). Library coordinators rated "Commitment to lifelong learning and career planning" (mean, 4.52), "Create an environment of mutual respect and trust" (mean, 4.44) and "Expertise in information retrieval and search strategy techniques" (mean, 4.43) as the top three competency statements.

The set of competencies prepared and validated in this study will help educators to design training programs for medical librarians in Pakistan. It will also assist the employers to recruit those who possess required competencies. It is hoped that this study has made a solid contribution to existing literature on competencies for librarians, especially in the area of health information services.