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## **Information Seeking Habits and Practices of Freshman Medical Students of University of Kelaniya**

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Studying information-seeking habits of different groups of students is important as a decision making tool for collection development practices and introducing variety to library services. This study examined the past experiences of information access and usage by freshman medical students prior to their university admission. A survey was conducted on the new batch of MBBS students admitted in 2016 using a self-administered questionnaire distributed at the orientation programme.

Of the 155 respondents, majority (65.1%) were female students. They represented eight administrative districts of the country. Highest percentage of students was admitted from the Western Province (52.9%), while 20.6% and 10.3% were from North Western and Central provinces respectively. Students who reportedly visited the library at least on a weekly basis constituted 52.9% of the sample, while the remaining 47.1% did so less frequently. Even though the main information seeking mode was searching the web (99%), a considerable number of students used library books (80%) and personal textbooks (61.9%). Library books were a source of information for 83.7% of females and 75.5% of males, while use of personal text books for this purpose was noted by 62.2% of female and 60.4% of male students. Books lent by colleagues were a source of information for 37.8% of females and 47.2% males. The main purpose of information used by majority of students (84%) was self-study. Seventy-six percent (n=118) of students used information for gaining additional subject knowledge while 68.4% (n=106) used it for entertainment and 50.3% (n=78) for project work. School library is the place for information access for 98.7% of the students, followed by town council libraries (37.4%) and provincial council libraries (16.8%). There was no significant difference between males and females ( $p = 0.701$ ) or those from the Western Province and other provinces ( $p = 0.082$ ), when it comes to frequency of library usage. The research finds that even though the main information seeking method of sampled freshman medical students is the internet, a considerable number still rely on libraries and other print based resources.

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