Objectives

To evaluate the impact and value of literature searching by determining how scientists and health care professionals actually used the information in the search results in their research and medical activities.

Methods

A nine question, online survey was developed to solicit feedback and identify the reason(s) for the search request, how the user planned to utilize the information received, and its potential impact on the user’s work. Each time a literature search was requested, the reference team (four librarians), sent the survey link with the search results. Data collection started in February 2015 and ended December 2015.

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Results

During this 11-month period, a total of 805 literature searches were completed by the reference team. From this pool of potential survey responses, 220 surveys were completed, for a response rate of 27.3%. Several survey questions allowed for multiple responses to be selected; exceeding the total number of completed surveys.

Key Findings

• 92.7% of respondents indicated that the information received answered their question and less than 10% provided reasons why their question was not answered. The most frequent reason – there appears to be not enough evidence published on the topic.
• 31.3% of survey respondents indicated this was their first time submitting a request.
• 66.3% of survey respondents can be classified as repeat requesters.
• 95.5% of respondents utilized the results they received to impact patient care, enhance their own knowledge base, or work productivity.
• 77% of respondents used search results in scholarly communications activities.

Conclusions

The Library has an opportunity to step-up efforts to market Literature Search Services and develop an awareness campaign using survey feedback to promote benefits. The information delivered to users had both practical (e.g. saved them time) and creative (e.g. helped them to generate new ideas) implications that should be incorporated into these marketing messages.