This is a Brief Online Learning Tutorial (or BOLT) brought to you by the LISTEN project, a HRSA funded project focusing on improving the information literacy competencies of nursing students and professional nurses.
In the clinical setting the need to access information quickly is critical to patient care. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you know you have collected information to help you in practice but you can’t find it or remember where it is stored. This tutorial presents some tools and offers tips on organizing and integrating information.
Information is being generated at explosive rates. Information related to the nursing profession is said to double every 5 years (Weaver, 1993). With so much information available and easily accessible, it is critical and important to organize information in a way that can be retrieved for your career advancement or for your professional practice.
As a professional nurse, the ability to apply information effectively and efficiently in the workplace largely depends on how you organize information. If you organize information in a meaningful way you can access the information easily when you need it. Organizing information starts with collecting the information related to your needs. After retrieving the information, you have to organize it to build your own filing cabinet. Most importantly, make use of the information and integrate the information in your practice.
We are familiar with using labels, folders, and filing cabinets to organize information. As the Internet is becoming the major tool to search for information, organizing information using computers becomes the better option. However, depending on the situation, environment, and your needs, you might need to consider both ways to organize information.
One simple way to organize online information is to use the web browsers. The popular Web browsers are Windows Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox.
You can use Add to Favorite to collect useful resources and organize them in folders using the Internet Explorer’s toolbar. Or use Firefox Bookmark This page to categorize the information into different folders.
Most online databases offer personalization tools for easily store and organize information so that you can access the saved information whenever you need it. For example, My NCBI is associated with PubMed/Medline while My EBSCOhost is with CINAHL via EBSCOhost. You can create multiple folders within your personal accounts and save the references you need while searching the databases. You can also share the saved information with your colleagues.
You can also use social bookmarking sites such as Delicious to organize information retrieved from online searching. You can assign tags to each online resource and organize them by topics. You can also share these tags/topics with your peers.
RSS reader can be used to organize and manage information if you are a RSS feed user. These are just a few web-based RSS Readers that can help organize information.
You can save your articles on your desktop folders or subject folders. You can also organize articles using a flash drive and name files by author names. You can easily transfer files and folders between a desktop and a flash drive.
There are so many ways to organize information! You don’t have to use all of them, but the key is to find a way that you are comfortable with and that works for you - then be persistent using it. To manage information, a good habit is to collect information useful to you and your work and file them into meaningful folders so that when you need them you can find it. You can also share with your colleagues when needed.
Continue to visit the LISTEN website, at listenuphealth.org, for more helpful tips on using technology and seeking, evaluating, and applying information in nursing to support evidence-based nursing practice.
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