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How One Library's Location Change Impacted Health Information Requests: Comparing Zip Codes and Health Disparities to Inform Library Services: Data Files

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Abstract

Background:

In 2014, the Preston Medical Library, serving both the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Medicine (UTGSM) and the University of Tennessee Medical Center (UTMC) moved from an academic office building to the main floor of an academic medical center. While the library previously served the public, health information requests have substantially increased in volume due to the new location and the opening of the Health Information Center (HIC).

Case Presentation:

Library staff maintained a record of patron requests, both topical and demographic information. Identifying data was removed, and requests were sorted by county and zip code. Tableau was used to create maps, visually showing where the largest concentrations of patrons are located. Requests were reviewed by zip code and county, comparing number of requests as well as poverty levels.

Conclusions:

There were 3,141 health information requests from September 21, 2014 to May 31, 2019, approximately a 208% monthly increase. The majority of requests were from Knox county and adjacent counties. Requests were also received from counties not previously reached and with elevated poverty levels. Collecting data on patron interactions is not only critical for institutional reporting, but also for community outreach. Researchers anticipate being able to better tailor services to the community based on the results.