

Title: Change to a mobile environment: PDA reference services at the library!

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There is an increasing need felt by the health library users for obtaining accurate, up to date, evidence-based and mobile scientific information in their daily clinical practice. This need to reduce diagnostic errors, save time and achieve the best decision-making for their patients, has become a serious problem to this group of health professionals, claiming more often to have next to itself, a portable library open 24 hours a day. Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) have been successfully introduced into the health libraries environment and give the users the opportunity to have the most recent and scientific information “in the palm of their hands”. The main objective in this study was to contribute to the implementation of user reference services based in PDAs, in Health Libraries in order to guarantee our health professional users, autonomy and mobility in their work places near the patients. We aim to know, if the European Health Libraries, are fully aware of the strengths and power of these new kind of services based on PDAs, giving them the chance to offer the adjusted help to this new user needs. The methodology used is based on online surveys, submitted to Portuguese and European Health Libraries, and by interviews conducted with a group of selected expert health users of PDAs, in medicine. We concluded that using PDAs, is the future in Medicine and the mission of health libraries is to offer services based on mobile technologies such as PDAs, if they want to serve their users with excellence.