Abstract

Background: The Internet is a valuable information tool, but users often struggle to locate good quality information from within the vast amount of information available.

Objectives: The aim of the study was to identify the online information resources available to assist students develop Internet searching skills, and to explore the students' priorities in online guides.

Methods: A qualitative approach was adopted with two phases. The first was a structured search of available online study skills resources. The second comprised 10group interviews with a total of 60 students at all stages of five undergraduate health and social care related courses at a UK university.

Results: The study found that there were good online guides available, but that, perversely, the better guides tended to require the best searching skills to locate them. A few students were enthusiastic about using online support, however the majority felt that if they had the skills to locate such resources they wouldn't use a study guide to improve these skills, and if they did not have the skills they would not think of using an online guide to develop them.

Conclusions: Students wanted assistance when they had problems or questions, rather than sites that offered structured learning experiences. Personal support rather than virtual support was also considered to be most important to the students in this study.