

Health Information Centre opens

On Monday September 30, the new health information centre at Westmead Hospital in Sydney's Western Region was officially opened by the NSW Minister for Health, Mr. Ron Mulock.

The centre contains over 1000 books and pamphlets covering more than 200 health topics, with their selection approved by the hospital's professional staff.

Background

Funding for the project was received through a Health Promotion Grant of \$30,000 with the hospital subsidiary \$12,600 to meet the estimated cost.

In March this year Health Link, the new Health Information Centre, was opened on a limited basis to patients, relatives, staff and health professions. After a three months trial period, the service hours were expanded. Current hours are Monday to Friday, 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm and Thursday mornings 9.00 am to 12.00 noon. The service is available to 'personal shoppers only'; however information is available to other hospitals, libraries or other health professionals wishing to establish a similar service.

How it works

The Centre is staffed by a librarian, who is responsible for its day to day running. Health Link is currently producing a *Guide to Consumer Health Information*, a resource list which will provide bibliographic service on specific areas of patient information both to Westmead Hospital, to other health professionals and librarians. It is envisaged that some of the material exchange will be possible via computer linkage.

The hospital's Health Promotion Officer and Paediatric Health Education Officer have been closely involved in the supervision and direction of the Centre's activities. Staff from several of the hospital's departments have played a significant role in the development of the centre, and will continue to monitor and supervise areas within the centre. The hospital has agreed to continue to support project activities.

The Health Information Centre is located on Level 2, between the AB and CD Ward Block, and opposite the Department of Community Medicine.

Summing up

The Hospital Health Promotion Grant has provided the Westmead Hospital with resources to establish a facility to act as a source of information on specific health problems for patients, relatives, staff and students.

Part of the role of Westmead Hospital as a teaching facility, is to develop new techniques or expertise in new forms of care. The establishment of the Health Information Centre will serve as a model for hospitals throughout Australia.

It is recognised that with access to credible information, health consumers can make a more intelligent and economical use of the health care systems, and be more aware of self care needs.

The establishment of Health Link by Westmead Hospital will undoubtedly increase the interest by health professionals in the hospital and throughout the region in patient education generally, and offer community access to the wide selection of credible health information which in the past, was hard to come by.

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Mr Leigh Baker, Manager of ACI's Information Retrieval Division, said that there had been a dramatic increase in the acceptance of online technology and an equally dramatic increase in the demand for new and innovative online information services.

In announcing that Software Sciences had selected ACI Computer Services as its exclusive Australasian agent for the World Reporter international news database service, Mr Keith Van Klink, Managing Director of Software Sciences, said that they had been anxious to provide enhanced services to the Australian business and government community, and the appointment of ACI would allow them to achieve this.

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