

Vocabulary and Taxonomy Issues When Searching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Health Literature

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Keywords: Keywords must be entered using lower-case letters except for proper nouns which should have the first letter of each word capitalized. Each keyword or keyword phrase should be separated by a semicolon (e.g., “metadata; evaluation; visual graphic analysis”). The keyword block should be formatted using the {Abstract} template element.

1. Abstract

1.1. Objective

Information documented in published articles relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) health issues is generally reported in a free-text or keyword format. This creates inaccessibility to bibliographic data in the health sciences and education-themed databases. The purpose of this poster is to describe the gaps in existing vocabularies and taxonomies, including the UMLS and MedlinePlus Consumer Vocabulary for the health sciences literature and the ERIC Thesaurus for education-themed literature, which are the primary resources used to retrieve literature on health issues for LGBT individuals. The poster will demonstrate more formal semantics and a working taxonomy that could be included in developing indices that would integrate data from all fields of medicine and biology as well as health education data.

1.2. Methods

A literature search on health issues of LGBT individuals was done, using indices of health sciences literature (MEDLINE), and the social and psycho-social sciences (PsycINFO). For integrative purposes, information science databases (Library and Information Science Abstracts, Library Literature and Information Sciences and Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts) were searched to provide information on the existence of published data that may have already existed in the field. Precise retrieval was difficult using standard subject heading lists and controlled vocabularies such as MeSH®, the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms®, the ERIC Thesaurus®, and the MedlinePlus® Consumer (searcher) Vocabulary. No searches adequately retrieved an integrated and inclusive representation of LGBT health literature. Similarly, the library and information science literature did not retrieve articles related to computational advances in enhancing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered terms. A search using existing taxonomies yielded 80 articles ranging from general to semi-specific accuracy. A careful reading of the articles prompted the effort to strengthen existing taxonomies including LGBT or “gay-sensitive” terms from the medical informatics and consumer-driven perspectives.

1.3. Results

A first-step model of LGBT terms, derived from a sampling of the published research literature as well as gay-slang and internet free text, is presented which suggests a more appropriate set of terms to use when searching the multi-disciplinary literature that reports current research on health concerns of LGBT persons. If a more specific taxonomy, including gay slang and terminology can be developed, tested, and described for this topic, and included in the UMLS thesauri, the terms will add to and enhance the sparse literature that is currently retrieved by using

consumer terminology (free text or keywords) when using academic and consumer retrieval systems.

2. Conclusions/Significance

“The fact that others might introduce old words with new meanings into previously relatively stable domains of discourse should make us think.”(1) Diversification of the ontological representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender terms requires a more precise attempt to update and enhance literature retrieval efforts of bibliographic information. Both pro’s and con’s discovered in the practicality of inclusion of gay slang (as introduced in the web directory, “Dictionary of gay slang, words and terms”(2), will be highlighted.

References

- Gilchrist A. Thesauri, taxonomies and ontologies - an etymological note. *Journal of Documentation*. 2003;59(1):7-18.
- Johnson R. Dictionary of Gay Slang, Words and Terms. 2010 [cited July 12, 2010]; Available from: <http://gaylife.about.com/od/gaydictionary/a/slangdictionary.htm>.