



P.O. Box 101058  
Denver, Colorado 80210-1058

May 4, 2005

Rhonda Gonzales  
Interim Dean/Assistant Professor for Library Services

Margaret Kleszynski  
Collection Development Librarian  
and Librarian for St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center

Colorado State University--Pueblo  
2200 Bonforte Blvd.  
Pueblo, CO 81001-4901

Dear Ms. Gonzales and Ms. Kleszynski,

The Library Cooperation Committee of the Colorado Council of Medical Librarians, Inc. (CCML), a statewide organization of individuals involved in information management in the health sciences, is writing to express our concern about the proposed closure of the St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center Library. Several issues concern us:

#### **Reciprocity and Community Benefit**

Through various activities, CCML promotes cooperative arrangements with the hospital libraries where our members are employed. Reciprocal interlibrary loan is based on the premise that all participants have a library collection and library staff, and therefore no charges are levied for borrowing. In April 2004 – March 2005, 716 articles were obtained for St. Mary-Corwin physicians and staff from other CCML libraries, saving the hospital approximately \$11,456.00 in fees. Denison Library at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Library charges \$16.00 for an unaffiliated user < <http://denison.uchsc.edu/interlibrary/illfees.htm> >; a commercial document delivery service would charge more.

The closing of this library, with the elimination of a collection and staff, may have the immediate effect of cutting off the St. Mary-Corwin medical staff, house staff, nurses, pharmacists, and other allied health personnel from these privileges. Even if services continue to be provided by the CSU library, some CCML libraries may refuse to loan because of the elimination of a staffed hospital library.

#### **Cost-Effectiveness of an Onsite Library**

The St. Mary-Corwin Medical Library staff provides access to information in an efficient and centralized manner. The need for information will continue after the closure, but will be addressed in a much less efficient manner. Costs for document delivery and information retrieval will increase. Hidden costs include lost time as health care professionals struggle to identify and retrieve information that was previously located quickly via the onsite library.

On the attached charts, some features of the St. Mary-Corwin Medical Library are compared to national benchmarks of library budgets and services provided by the Medical Library Association Benchmarking network (<http://www.mlanet.org/members/benchmark/index.html> - Members Only). The charts show that the St. Mary-

Corwin Medical Library is supported financially at a much lower level than the national median, except in the expenditures for print journals needed onsite. At the same time, due to the efficiency of the staff and the cooperative climate in Colorado, most of the service levels shown are comparable to the national median. These efficiencies will be lost if the library closes, and all costs for information will be higher.

## JCAHO

The St. Mary-Corwin Medical Library closure also calls into question compliance with the new JCAHO Element of Performance: “*There is a plan to provide for access to information during times when electronic systems are unavailable.*” The elimination of a centralized collection of print resources and professional staff to manage them will make compliance difficult. Print resources need to be managed to ensure that they are current, authoritative, complete, and available to all who need them, not scattered throughout the organization. The new JCAHO Periodic Performance Review requires a hospital to respond to its compliance with all standards, including those addressing knowledge-based information.

While we recognize the financial constraints facing all hospitals, our experience has taught us that reliance on electronic resources to replace professional library services results in inefficiency in information retrieval. Publishers are notorious for changing the content of their products with little notice. In addition, electronic resources, such as UpToDate, often produce an increase in requests for additional information not available electronically.

We urge the St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center administration reconsider the decision to close its Medical Library and eliminate the library staff.

Sincerely,

Sara Katsh, MA, Chair  
Colorado Council of Medical Librarians Library Cooperation Committee  
Head Librarian  
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses  
Center for Library Services and Archives  
Denver, CO 80231

Margaret Bandy  
Manager, Library and Media Services  
Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital  
Denver, CO 80218

Becky Berg  
Librarian  
Denver Medical Library, Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center  
Denver, CO 80218

Shandra Protzko  
Information Specialist  
Gerald Tucker Memorial Medical Library, National Jewish Medical and Research Center  
Denver, CO 80206

Carmen Urich  
Medical Librarian  
Medical Library  
North Colorado Medical Center  
Greeley, CO 80631

cc. Joyce Condon, President, Colorado Council of Medical Librarians