

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

HEALTH INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ELDERLY PEOPLE
LIVING IN OLD PEOPLE'S HOMES IN BULAWAYO

BY

CHENJERAI MAODZWA

(N0106561H)

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ABSTRACT

The study was mainly triggered by a statement by the World Fact Book 2011 that said little is currently known about the health information needs of elderly people in Zimbabwe and among the information needs experienced by elderly people, health information needs consistently achieved a high ranking. The purpose of this study was to examine the health information needs of elderly people living in old people's homes in Bulawayo as well as the health information channels they used for health information. The study explored whether information channels satisfied elderly people's health information needs. The study revealed that elderly people experienced a variety of information needs; the emergence of those needs was attributed to varying circumstances while elderly people in this study often used one or more information channels to satisfy their health information needs, face to face contact overwhelmingly was their preferred methods of obtaining health information. The circumstances under which elderly people's health information needs arise were significant to the outcome of need satisfaction. These circumstances revealed the relationship between a health information need and the channel used to satisfy it, as well as the degree of reliability of an information channel. Satisfying outcomes of the use of information were perceived by those elderly people to be a direct of successful channel interaction, although more research was needed to determine if these findings were typical. The study revealed that elderly people experienced challenges in accessing health information. Information professionals, health professionals and policy makers should work together hand in hand in trying to make health information easily available and accessible to elderly people living in old people's homes. Health professionals should also liaise all the time with information professionals and jointly repackage health information in formats that can be easily understood by elderly people.