The Development of Medical Library Consortia in Taiwan

 objectives:
In recent years, medical libraries in Taiwan are facing challenges of budget reduction but cost increasing. Also, the development and widespread use of e-journals have facilitated hospital libraries to build up digital library consortia. The Medical Library Committee, Library Association of the Republic of China (Taiwan), which is also known as LARMIC, provides comprehensive services to medical libraries. According to the nature of each medical library consortia, LARMIC assists in presenting and promoting consortia, disseminate their missions and visions to libraries, and also encourage libraries to join consortia that would meet their needs. This article introduces the history, and current situation of the largest medical library consortia in Taiwan, compares their differences, and then describes the role and functions of the LARMIC. At the end, the authors propose suggestions for future development.

method:
Review related literature, websites, and internal documents of famous medical library consortia in the US and Canada; Survey the history, resources, and current situation of the largest medical library consortia in Taiwan; Suggest the role and functions of the LARMIC.

results:
Demonstrate the status of famous medical library consortia in the US and Canada, and then focus on the development of medical library consortia in Taiwan, by introducing and comparing the start up, electronic resources, and current status of the largest medical library consortia in Taiwan.

1. Consortium for Medical Electronic Resources in Taiwan (MERIT)  
   National Taiwan University Medical Library, 2000

2. Electronic Library of the Department of Health, Executive Yuan  
   Department of Health, Executive Yuan, 2003

3. Taipei Medical University Digital Library Consortium (TMU-Dlib)  
   Taipei Medical University, 2003

4. Digital Medical Resources Cooperative Network of Veterans Hospitals  
   Taipei Veterans General Hospital, 2003

5. Project of unitied purchasing of core biomedical science journals and databases  
   National Taiwan University Medical College, 2004

6. Armed Forces Hospital Digital Library Consortium  
   National Defense Medical Center, 2005

7. United purchasing consortium of electronic resources in central and southern Taiwan  
   National Cheng Kung University Medical Library, 2005

LARMIC
Medical libraries in Taiwan, other than those under research institutions and medical universities, there are still nearly around 400 mid or small sized ones across the medical centers, regional hospitals and district hospitals. Due to the situation that 7 main consortia all operate independently, library funds and resource collections have been shared out scattered, hence such disorganization disables the chance for the libraries from having the sufficient budget to effectively keep up with vendors who carry information resources such as databases and e-journals. As a result, in 2007, the LARMIC (Library Association of Republic of China Medical Library Committee) came up with a solution called “united purchasing”, the LARMIC represent all medical libraries in Taiwan to deal with all of the procurement activities. In September 2007, on the LARMIC annual meeting, Merckxord and Pfizer sales representatives were invited to state their global pricing and marketing plans toward Taiwan market. On the meeting, the LARMIC decided to conduct a survey at the medical libraries about the price that the medical libraries were charged for before and the new demand in regards to those two above mentioned resources, so as the LARMIC could use it as a reference for further price negotiation. After a convincing and intensive negotiation, Merckxord agreed to raise 2% from the last year price only, which is the first time in history that Merckxord had yielded, surrendering extra 18% increase it usually required. Pfizer also offered a consortium special discount for all libraries in Taiwan. Such accomplishment brings the medical libraries the benefits of lower procurement expenses and faster procurement processes.

conclusions:
1. Introducing divers types of resources
2. Extending the cooperative levels
3. Strengthening the cooperation with consortia of medical societies
4. Establishing communication channels among consortium
5. Pursuing sustainable development of consortium operation