

E-Learning Experiences in La Ribera Health Department

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows how the training of health professionals is improving thanks to the use of new technologies, in particular e-learning. This type of technology is widely used in medical education and there are multiple research works that report its effective deployment by health professionals and students. However, there is a need to incorporate e-learning platforms and online methods in healthcare organizations through a systematic and rigorous approach what is proposed in the current work. This approach has been applied since 2009 in the context of La Ribera Health Department implementing a high number of e-learning experiences. The obtained outcomes reveal how useful have been these experiences to promote an organized and effective professional training.

Keywords: *E-Learning Platforms, Electronic Medical Record, Hospital Training, Human Resources, On-Line Methods*

INTRODUCTION

The medical education of professionals working in the healthcare environment is the maintenance and improvement of new knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to better their qualification in the workplace (Ruiz de Adana & Elipe, 2006). This paper shows how the training of health professionals is improving thanks to the use of new technologies, in particular e-learning.

E-learning deals with the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that can be applied in different education areas and it is broadly inclusive of all forms of educational technology in learning and teaching.

Nevertheless, this general phenomenon is usually linked with a special kind of platforms called Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) or Learning Management Systems (LMS), which are addressed to support e-learning processes providing content repositories and instructional services.

The use of e-learning in medical education is currently widespread. There are several references that reviewed its effective deployment by health professionals and students. For example, Childs et al. (2004) detected some barriers in educational healthcare applications such as poorly designed contents or lack of user skills and they proposed some solutions such as the

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integration of e-learning courses in the training curriculum or the support to standardize an e-learning procedure that could become critical success factors for e-learning in the health field. This problem of using new technologies is explained in this paper, showing how to implement a systematic approach for introducing e-learning in an organization. Choules (2007) also noticed that e-learning was moving from textbooks in electronic format to a truly interactive medium that could be delivered to meet the educational needs of students and postgraduate learners but he recognized the importance of mixing electronic and non-electronic methods to achieve learning objectives in medical education. This kind of blended learning is a key issue in the current paper and further sections describe how it can be implemented in the context of the Health Department in La Ribera Hospital.

La Ribera Health Department is located in the Comunitat Valenciana (Spain) and it provides a new model of healthcare management that includes a special attention to medical education and the use of e-learning technologies in this field. In this context, a learning environment called Campus Ribera has been developed to provide support to the different types of training and learning processes for the different professionals of the Health Department. This learning environment has been complemented with an e-learning procedure/protocol that allows the design and elaboration of online and blended courses addressed to different healthcare areas. Such procedure has been working from 2009 and it has been applied in more than 100 training activities involving a large part of the professional organization. The obtained outcomes have shown the positive impact of e-learning technologies in the instruction of health professionals as well as the importance of mechanisms and procedures that guide the deployment of such technologies.

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows. The second section, background, provide a detailed description of the Ribera Health Department where e-learning has been applied and report some related works that has been developed in similar contexts. The third

section, e-learning proposal, e-learning activities, actions and activities online support, describe the e-learning application in Hospital la Ribera that includes the learning environment called Campus Ribera together with the educational activities and the e-learning protocol provided in this context. Section 4, results, internal training, online assessment, process automation, report some results and outcomes coming from these e-learning activities and, finally some Conclusions and further works are drawn.

BACKGROUND

La Ribera Health Department consists of various health centers with more than 2000 healthcare professionals in the region of La Ribera (Alzira-Spain) Figure 1 shows the geographical location of this department, with the flagship La Ribera University Hospital, first practical example of a successful model for the comprehensive management of the public health, based on the strategic partnership between a group of leadership companies (Ribera Salud II UTE-Ley 18/82) with the Generalitat Valenciana, with the aim of providing new solutions to the public health sector model.

La Ribera Health Department serves a population of more than 250,000 people and it is an active member of the Valencia Health Agency that it is aligned with its strategic objectives and fully linked with the development of many initiatives in draft and future prospects with the Health Department. Moreover, its management is according to the criteria of excellence, efficiency and sustainability of the overall health of the population of the Department in terms of care, research and teaching, based on the following values; Sustainability, Professionalism, Innovation and Transparency. Thus, those responsible for the La Ribera University hospital, in accordance with the aforementioned values are in search of new techniques and developments that will improve patient care, quality of treatment and

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