
Chapter XIX

How Useful are World Wide Web Discussion Boards and Email in Delivering a Case Study Course in Reproductive Medicine

David Cahill
University of Bristol, UK

Julian Cook
University of Bristol, UK

Julian Jenkins
University of Bristol, UK

ABSTRACT

A pilot course was carried out aiming to evaluate the relative potential of email and World Wide Web-based discussion boards to deliver an online course in reproductive medicine to 18 doctors training in obstetrics and gynecology, distributed around the South West region of England. The course organisers presented one case study per month and asked participants to comment on it by electronic means. The course was evaluated for its ability to deliver and ease of access. Tutors' and participants' views were sought. The information gathered was incorporated into the development of further Internet-based educational projects.

INTRODUCTION

Computer networks such as the Internet have been used for a number of years to enable tutors and learners in higher education to communicate at a distance (Feenberg, 1989; Mason, 1994). However, the potential of this technology to support the training of geographically spread out junior hospital doctors has only recently begun to be explored (Draycott et al., 1997). This paper describes an evaluation of World Wide Web discussion boards and email to deliver an interactive case study course in reproductive medicine from the Centre for Reproductive Medicine, University of Bristol, to doctors across the geographical South West of England and beyond. The course ran between April and August 1998.

There is a clear need for alternative approaches to both undergraduate and postgraduate training to accommodate the requirements of new curricula and increasing knowledge (Calman, 2000). New technologies such as the Internet are a vital component of this. With each year, the alterations that occur in the fabric of education technology mean that a flexible and open approach is vital so as to make best use of these advances (Harden, 2000).

BACKGROUND

Reproductive medicine is that part of gynecology which specifically relates to the process of reproduction. It encompasses such areas of medicine as infertility, miscarriage, and the failure of menstrual periods to begin or to be maintained. It is one of five areas of particular specialist training recognised by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG, 2001). Hospitals capable of providing training in these areas are few, and therefore to gain exposure to these areas, doctors in training (hereinafter, trainees) must travel to or work specifically in these hospitals. The University of Bristol Centre for Reproductive Medicine is one such unit capable of providing all the requirements necessary for specialist training in reproductive medicine.

In a region such as the South West of England, it is recognised that long distances make travel to regional centres of expertise difficult for trainees to attend speciality training (RCOG, 1997). Some of the authors (Cahill and Jenkins) developed a full structured training programme for doctors in training at the Centre for Reproductive Medicine, partly through the medium of the Internet. The primary aim of this pilot training course was to test the effectiveness of the Internet to make some elements of that training programme more widely available. Would trainees be able to access the course and would they actually use such a facility in practice, how would they use it, and how could the course be designed to maximise levels of use and usefulness?

Description of the Course

Trainees were invited to enroll through an advertisement that was placed in a

9 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/useful-www-discussion-boards-email/30619

Related Content

Designing Digital Cognitive Games that Facilitate Mindful Reasoning and Decision-Making

Robert Haworth and Kamran Sedig (2013). *Cases on E-Learning Management: Development and Implementation* (pp. 196-222).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/designing-digital-cognitive-games-facilitate/68101

Security and Online Learning: To Protect and Prohibit

Anne Adams and Ann Blanford (2003). *Usability Evaluation of Online Learning Programs* (pp. 331-359).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/security-online-learning/30618

Librarian as Collaborator: Bringing E-Learning 2.0 Into the Classroom by Way of the Library

Susanne Markgren, Carrie Eastman and Leah Massar Bloom (2010). *Handbook of Research on Practices and Outcomes in E-Learning: Issues and Trends* (pp. 260-277).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/librarian-collaborator-bringing-learning-into/38358

Universal Design for Culturally-Diverse Online Learning

Jane H. Eberle and Marcus D. Childress (2007). *Globalized E-Learning Cultural Challenges* (pp. 239-254).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/universal-design-culturally-diverse-online/19304

E-Mentoring in Global Software Development Teams: Success Factors to Develop a Common Culture

Ricardo Colomo-Palacios, Alok Mishra, Cristina Casado-Lumbreras and Pedro Soto-Acosta (2013). *Multiculturalism in Technology-Based Education: Case Studies on ICT-Supported Approaches* (pp. 160-175).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/mentoring-global-software-development-teams/69579