

Chapter 21

Unlearning and Relearning in Online Health Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the role of integrating medical education with medical practice through online collaborative learning among the various stakeholders involved with healthcare education and practice. It elaborates the discussion with examples of information needs and information-seeking behaviors of patients and physicians. The role of the Internet (infrastructure), and especially the WWW (applications and content), is elucidated with respect to the concepts of online collaborative learning as applied to medical education and practice where the emphasis is on user driven healthcare.

“Data is a campfire around which organizations huddle for heat and light. The irony is in the fact that neither the heat nor the light yields a solution. The solution emerges out of the huddling (i.e., through the organizational interaction in a discussion forum)”. -Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, anonymous. Quoted in: http://www.unmc.edu/Community/ruralmeded/quotes_groups_rural_medical_ed.htm

“We are evolving from the information age, focused on mass consumption, into the conceptual age, one fuelled by innovation.” –Robert Kelly in

Creative Expression Creative Education: <http://www.temerondetselig.com/Creative%20Expression%20Creative%20Education.htm>

INTRODUCTION

User driven healthcare is defined as “Improved health care achieved with concerted collaborative learning between multiple users and stakeholders, primarily patients, health professionals and other actors in the care giving collaborative network across a web interface.” (Biswas *et al.*, 2008).

In this chapter I would try to discuss some of the applications and prospects of online collabora-

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tive learning for user driven health care. At the beginning let us look at some of the studies trying to integrate medical education with practice.

We begin with the perspective from the Southern hemisphere. From Australia, Van Der Meyden (2007) states that the fulfillment of general practice as a major provider of medical education remains an exciting and challenging task — and its realization may well mean a continuing renaissance of general practice in countries. In a similar project, summative evaluation will be done when the University of New South Wales, Australia's new program graduates work in the existing health care system. It is proposed that they will be followed up to see whether they apply the public health values in their practice (Klinken Whelan and Black, 2007).

In the Northern hemisphere, Canadian medical educators believe that educational programming must be offered with content beyond the provision of medical knowledge and skills. Non-clinical physician, patient and system related issues must be addressed in educational programming to support optimum physician performance and better healthcare outcomes (Lynn and Bluman, 2009).

Globally, medical informatics can play a vital role in integrating medical practice with education (Sarbadhikari 2005). To cite an example, there has been team based learning collaborative like: <http://www.tlcollaborative.org/> that is a group of health professions educators dedicated to using team-based learning to further medical and allied health education. Another such example is: <http://therapeuticseducation.org/>

Although Wikipedia is the mother of all wikis, emerging specialized wikis like Medpedia: <http://www.medpedia.com/> and WikiDoc: <http://www.wikidoc.org/> as well as informative portals like Medline Plus: <http://medlineplus.gov/> are gradually dislodging the practicing physician as an information source.

Open source communities like Mirth and user driven healthcare forums like Mediscuss: [http://](http://www.mediscuss.org/)

www.mediscuss.org/ are a few steps in such direction.

On the other hand, Anderson *et al* (2008) discusses learning based on patient case reviews. They conclude that patient case reviews initiate reflective processes providing feedback about performance in real life situations. Family physicians are in favor of patient case reviews as a learning method, because it embraces the complexities they encounter in their daily practice and is based on personal experiences.

Biswas *et al* (2009) have discussed the role of open health information management for developing a novel, adaptable mixed-platform for supporting health care informational needs. Their platform enables clients (patient users) requiring healthcare to enter an unstructured but detailed account of their day-to-day health informational requirements that may be structured into a lifetime electronic health record.

While integrating medical education with medical practice is one aspect, using online collaborative learning to achieve that is another aspect. The aim of this chapter is to analyze the role of online collaborative learning in the backdrop of user driven healthcare. Therefore, more stress will be given on discussing the efforts that are underway to fruitfully harness the potentials of online collaborative learning. The “users” in this scenario include both the care givers (physicians) as well as the care seekers (patients).

The next section deals with the Internet and the Web, followed by a section on the some examples of online collaborative learning for user driven healthcare. The concluding section focuses on the future prospects.

THE INTERNET AND THE WORLD WIDE WEB

The *Internet* or the *Net* is a “Network of (computer) networks”. It is the global data communications backbone, *i.e.*, the hardware and software infra-

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