

Letter To The Editor: Medical Teachers And Students In India Should Receive Training In Information Communication Technology

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Abstract

Sir,

Significant changes have taken place in field of medical education because of new technology and technological advances.^{1,2} Medical schools, particularly in developed countries, have invested heavily in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), not only to deliver education, but also to improve the quality of health care services. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations have acknowledged that ICTs are useful tools in the field of medical education and health care delivery.³ In developing countries like India, ICTs can be used to improve the quality of medical education and health care delivery system.³

Examples of ICTs include e-learning, telemedicine, videoconferencing, virtual universities, virtual patients, simulations, animations, medical informatics, robotics and telerobotics, biomedical practice, research and electronic medical records. In short, ITCs have revolutionized medical education, research and patient care.⁴

Challenges faced by today's medical teachers in teaching tomorrow's physicians are different from those faced by their predecessors, and changes in health care delivery and advances in medicine have increased the responsibility and expectations from academic faculty.⁵ The traditional role of the educator has changed from disseminator of knowledge to facilitator. The use of ICTs is of vital importance in this new role of educators.⁶ Faculty, administrators and learners have found that e-learning and blended learning is a powerful force in medical education.⁷

Several studies (e.g. Nurjana et al.) have suggested formal inclusion of ICT instruction in the teaching of undergraduate

medicine, to enhance medical students' ability to acquire, appraise, and use information to solve clinical and other problems.⁸ However, in India, most of the medical teachers have not received any formal training in the field of ICT, and ICT is not included as a subject in the medical curriculum. Due to lack of proper training, complete capability to make efficient use of ICT is not attained. Due to lack of basic knowledge, it becomes difficult to understand and cope up with the advances in software and hardware which are taking place in the field of ICT. Medical teachers who don't have the technical knowledge of the use of computers can lag behind their colleagues who have acquired knowledge of information technology while using ICT tools in teaching, health care and research.

Hence, it is necessary to impart ICT training to medical teachers in India, and to incorporate ICT as a subject in medical curriculum. This will not only improve the quality of medical education, but also augment health care system and research.

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