

Title: Integration of distance learning with conventional classroom teaching.

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Introduction:

The teacher's role in conventional medical education is often limited to that of a dispenser of information. Distance learning (DL), defined as any non conventional teaching which does not depend on face to face teaching as the primary mode of instruction, can effectively fill many of the existing gaps of conventional teaching.

Objectives:

The purpose of this project is to develop faculty expertise in DL through integrating DL with conventional classroom teaching in a traditional medical school.

Methods:

The self-instructional material (SIM) on Breast Feeding developed as part of Global Nutrition project 2002 formed the starting point of this intervention. The SIM was shared with the faculty of CMC Ludhiana, who were then invited to join a core group, which would develop more such modules for medical students. A total of 12 faculty members volunteered to participate. They were taken through a series of workshops to make them aware about the basic principles of DL, programmed learning, writing for distance education, evaluation tools and PowerPoint as a vehicle for developing and delivering the material. During each weekly meeting, the group developed a small presentation, which was discussed for its pedagogic utility and interactivity. Necessary changes were made in the material, which was again subjected to the same process till the group was satisfied with it.

After the group acquired the needed skills, two modules in Physiology were developed and tested. A process of pre-test and post-test was used to evaluate the cognitive aspects while a Likert scale was used for testing the acceptance. There was a significant gain in knowledge after going through the material. The students had a positive attitude towards using SIMs as a learning tool.

Results:

The group produced a the full fledged SIM on Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, which has all the elements of a self learning module in terms of pedagogic utility, interactivity, self-learning, feedback and guidance for further learning. It has many technical improvements, which were felt in the previous module and is much easier to navigate and understand.

Conclusions:

This project has demonstrated in clear terms that it is possible to apply multiplier effect for the knowledge and skills. It is expected that as the IMCI module is made available in the institutional library, more faculty members will be willing to join this group of distance educators and will be able to overcome some of the shortcomings of conventional teaching.

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