

Dependable Reviews of Medical Education Research Literature

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Staying up to date with new medical literature is a challenge. One study estimated that if a physician conscientiously read two new journal articles a day, at the end of the year, that physician would be 550 years behind in keeping up with the literature.¹ Luckily, there are literature review services that systematically survey the literature to identify clinically relevant and methodologically sound articles that impact practice. Many of these services provide daily or weekly e-mail alerts to physicians who can choose content areas of interest and select the type of alerts they receive.

But what about medical education literature? In medical education, such review services are lacking. The most common methods for keeping up with advances in medical education include discussion with colleagues and participating in academic meetings or school committees.² To meet the needs of our teaching faculty, medical educators at Rutgers University's Library of the Health Sciences and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School developed a medical education literature review service to help medical school faculty stay apprised of current trends in medical education research.

DR MERL (Dependable Reviews of Medical Education Research Literature) started with two clinical faculty regularly reviewing new publications in three leading medical education journals. Today the free monthly review service is available via a monthly e-mail newsletter and blog (drmerl.wordpress.com). Reviews are written by both clinical and non-clinical medical school faculty. The journals regularly reviewed include *Academic Medicine*, *Medical Education*, *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, and *BMC Medical Education*, among others. Medical education articles from specialty journals are also included. Six to seven reviews appear per month and cover topics in undergraduate and graduate medical education, such as communication skills, feedback, learner mistreatment, and trustworthy professional activities. Each review is approximately 200 words in length, providing both a concise summary and a commentary of the reviewed article. Reviews include the full citations of the original articles, links to corresponding PubMed articles, and color-coded tags. Past reviews are archived, and

the entire corpus of reviews is searchable.

In 2013, DR MERL was endorsed by the Northeast Group on Education Affairs. It currently has a newsletter distribution of more than 245 medical educators and blog readers from seven countries. To receive the free monthly newsletter alert, e-mail drmerlreviews@gmail.com. To start reading the reviews today, check out the blog at drmerl.wordpress.com.

DR MERL is a joint project of the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Library of the Health Sciences and MERIG (Medical Education Research Interest Group). All reviews are written by Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and New Jersey Medical School faculty. Learn more about DR MERL and the reviewers at <http://drmerl.wordpress.com/about/>.

References

1. Masys DR. Effects of current and future information technologies on the health care workforce. *Health Affairs* 2002; 21:33
2. Ozuah PO. Use of medical journals among pediatric educators. *JAMA* 2002; 288(9):1061-2.