

SIGN OF THE TIMES: PART I

Engaging Clinical Learners with Technology

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Since clinical learners (i.e. medical students doing clerkships, residents, and fellows) spend most of their time outside a classroom, it can be challenging to keep them engaged during teaching sessions. The use of phones, tablets, and software can be used to enhance educational activities and actively involve today's learners.

Enhance Teaching Sessions

For presentations, stop using boring PowerPoint and start using Prezi! This visually appealing and non-linear presentation software will make you look cool. Basic Prezi formatting is free, although a premium edition is available for a charge. Polling software such as Turning Point or Poll Everywhere can be used to actively engage learners with questions. These applications allow one to ask a question and listen to all responses at once. Poll Everywhere is free for up to 40 responses, and questions can be created beforehand or on the spot. The responses can be viewed in different formats (i.e. bars, word clouds, texts, etc) and can also be anonymous. One disadvantage is that each learner must download the app and register an account before participating. Turning Point is expensive but makes it easy to embed questions into a presentation to make it more engaging. Packages are available with devices (i.e. clickers), or responses can be collected via mobile devices. Other known polling software includes SurveyMonkey and PollDaddy.

Enable Collaboration

Backchanneling is an educational technique in which learners are given the opportunity to discuss and express their thoughts and questions in real time during the learning session. The most common backchannel tool is Twitter. By formulating a hashtag during the session, everyone can view tweets and communicate openly.

Another more versatile tool to encourage backchanneling is Padlet. This is essentially a virtual discussion wall where people can easily post their thoughts about a common topic. It can be used during morning reports, journal club, and didactic teaching sessions. One use is to ask learners to list the gaps of knowledge they recognize in a PICO format (i.e. population, intervention, comparison, and outcome).

Communication with learners can be enhanced via texting as well. Millennial learners are comfortable using Line, Whatsapp, and Facebook messenger. However, these usually require you to share personal phone numbers and information, which learners may not feel comfortable sharing with the teacher. Many American schools use an app called Remind. Remind is free, and it allows safe communication with your learners at all times. This app can be used to remind students about educational sessions and one-on-one mentoring or make general announcements. Additionally, this app seems to be better tolerated than the traditional paging method.

Sharing Educational Activities

Research has shown that recording lectures and other educational sessions to make them available online after a class does not translate into poor attendance. So start recording yourself! You can use your own phone and then load your content to a private YouTube channel. There are other more sophisticated ways to record and edit your lectures using Panopto or Camtasia, for example. If you record your lectures, you can add them to your own teaching portfolio.

New technology gives us the power to engage and collaborate with our learners in ways that were not previously possible. Learning new apps, software, and mobile-based technologies can seem intimidating at first but can lead to valuable enhanced educational experiences for all.

References

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