

Proposed Title:

“Bridging the Gap in Remote Medical Education: Using the web and IT to support student learning”

Presenter Details

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Abstract

By placing undergraduate medical students in a geographically remote location for a year of their clinical studies, universities need to ensure that student learning is not compromised by lack of access to core resources. The current educational emphasis on self-directed learning and the acquisition of life long learning skills means that actual teacher-student contact time is reduced and that technology is used to deliver some core teaching material. Thus for the learning opportunities to be perceived as equitable between students studying in large city-based locations and those in remote areas, adjustments needed to be made to fill the gap created by the isolation.

At the University of Western Australia, the 22 students enrolled in the new Rural Clinical School complete their entire fifth academic year in subgroups of 2-9 students at remote, rural centres up to 1000km away from the major teaching hospitals where their remaining 100 student peers are taught. As the web is an integral part of communication, formative assessment and the delivery support material for short term clinical attachments in our curriculum, and as a number of key whole year teaching sessions occur throughout the academic year, the “gap” had to be bridged. A combination of an innovative adaptation of the web curriculum resource to an identical copy served locally from CD on the students’ laptop computers, along with the recording and subsequent streaming of city-based, key, synchronous teaching sessions has enriched the remote students’ learning and appears to have overcome perceived disadvantages for the rural students.