

Role of Podcasts in the Effective Delivery of Medical Education

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INTRODUCTION

The delivery of medical education is a challenging task for educators in the current era.¹ It is challenging because the medical students are no longer dependent on teachers as the only source of knowledge providers, and being adult learners, the students prefer to learn at their pace often beyond the classroom settings.¹ At the same time, the emergence of the coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has forced administrators to shift from the conventional face-to-face teaching to the online mode of teaching, which has its own constraints, in terms of ensuring the active engagement of the students for prolonged periods of time.² All these developments call for the need for the administrators and medical educators to introduce curricular reforms so that we can continue to facilitate the learning among medical students and thereby aid them to attain the intended learning outcomes.^{1,2}

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICAL EDUCATION

It will not be wrong to state that the medical students of today are quite familiar with information technology and a significant proportion of them utilizing the same to enhance their learning.³ The same thing stands true with reference to the use of social media by different medical students.^{3,4} In fact, in the last decade, there has been an enormous rise in the popularity of various social media applications and instant messenger applications, and a drastic change has been reported in the way medical students communicate, interact, and learn from each other.³⁻⁵ Moreover, definite evidence is available to suggest the utility of different social media applications (like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube) in facilitating the delivery of medical education and active engagement of medical students.⁶⁻¹⁰

PODCASTS

The term podcasts and its application first came into existence in the early part of the 21st century.¹¹ It generally refers to an audio (preferably) or a video file that is made available on the internet, which can be downloaded by the users whenever they want to listen. These podcasts can cover a wide range of topics and that too by different streams of people for a wider reach.^{11,12} The general population or the specific target audience can listen to these podcasts and be aware of the topics of their concern so that they can take an informed decision, once the need arises. These podcasts can have extensive utility in improving the knowledge of the masses about topics of public health importance.¹¹⁻¹³

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PODCASTS AND MEDICAL EDUCATION

As reported in other fields, podcasts have immense scope in the effective delivery of medical education.¹²⁻¹⁵ Multiple important topics can be covered via the medium of podcasts and they can be shared with the students either using different social media applications or across the learning management system.^{12,13} The idea is that the learning process continues even after college hours and at times when the students are willing to learn on their own.¹²⁻¹⁴ In fact, different podcasts have been released on various important topics, such as different respiratory or adventitious sounds during auscultation and different types of heart murmurs, and they are very much listened to by the medical students from across the world to augment their learning.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, different medical colleges explored the potential of podcast in ensuring seamless delivery of the curriculum, and encouraging results were obtained.¹⁵ We must understand that these podcasts do not only target students who prefer having an auditory learning style but even other students.¹³⁻¹⁵ However, in order to enhance their popularity and better acceptance, it is vital that all these recordings should be done in a quality-assured manner, the duration of the same should be kept optimal (and not very long, as the audience might lose interest), and the right platform should be selected to ensure easy accessibility by the medical students.^{16,17}

PODCASTS AND SRI BALAJI VIDYAPEETH, PUDUCHERRY

Realizing the potential of podcasts in the current world, including its need to improve the awareness of people about topics

of public health importance, the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (SBV), Deemed to be University, Puducherry, took the lead to reach different segments of the general population. Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth initiated six series of podcasts in the year 2020, namely Dear All, SBV Education and Educators, SBV Health and Well-being, SBV Personal Development, SBV Regional Language Series, and SBV Research and Innovations.¹⁸ The series on SBV Education and Educators focused on important areas in the field of medical education and the ways in which it can be strengthened in the due course of time.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

To conclude, medical education delivery is undergoing a paradigm shift as multiple curricular reforms have been introduced. Podcasts are an effective tool to improve the delivery of medical education and can be looked upon as an approach to supplement the process of curriculum delivery. The need of the hour is to tap the potential of podcasts and use the same to facilitate learning among medical students.

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