

Methods: The National Rehabilitation Center, with economic support from the National Science and Technology Council (Mexico) and the Center for International Rehabilitation (USA), have established a digital edition laboratory, equipped with an audio and video recording studio, digital video (2) and still (2) cameras, lightning equipment, microphones, sound mixers, 4 state of the art workstations, scanners, plotters, printers, etc. With this equipment, high quality audio visual material is created. Some courses are streamed to the web, and others are used for CD or DVD training modules. Physicians, social workers, IT engineers, graphic designers, and photographers, work to develop these educational products.

Results: Up to date, after 1 year of work, valuable products have emerged from the laboratory and we have started the creation of a video collection of orthopedic surgery and rehabilitation procedures.

Conclusion: This laboratory can be a good example, for those willing to develop high quality educational material which can be burned to CD/DVD ROM, or streamed on demand through the internet, thus allowing busy clinicians to update their skills whenever they have the time to do it.

E-Learning in Medicine, is There a Connection?

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Health professionals need to keep up with medical knowledge for their every day practice in order to provide the best health care for their patients and improve their skills, so that new medical information can be integrated into the routine practice. Physicians regularly attend medical meetings or conferences, workshops or seminars as part of being engaged in continuing medical education (CME), so as to access up-to-date information.

It has been reported that physicians spend around 50 hours per year engaged on traditional CME activities, although this kind of postgraduate education has been described as not enough for changing physicians' practices or enhance health care outcomes. This could be related to the fact that physicians engaged on traditional CME do not participate in an active way, since most of the activities are lectured-based so they act as a passive audience. Another problem facing traditional CME is that people have to leave their working place or home in order to attend these lectures.

CME activities need to change, in order to involve the learner in an active role by using self-directed learning. The development of Information Technology (IT) and the possibility of using web-based tools for CME can provide a new kind of post-graduate education by using e-learning. This new form of providing "learning with technology" has been tried with success in different industries, mainly those who are close related to IT, but there is little experience on its application in healthcare.

CME activities using e-learning can involve physicians in self-directed learning and potentially improve clinical performance since it can be integrated to the medical practice. The counterpart is that physicians using e-learning need to have some IT knowledge and interest in changing the way they engage in CME.

We will review the characteristics of e-learning and its potential usefulness in CME, in order to describe the main features that a web-based learning environment should contain.

Conclusions: CME needs to change and adapt to the increasing and changing educational needs of practicing physicians, Internet technology's can help by introducing self-directed CME in order to improve physician performance and the quality of medical care.