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Contents

Viewpoints

Original Papers

XSL·FO
RenderX

Tutorial

Review

Letters to the Editor

Viewpoint

Best Practices for Integrating Medical Students Into Telehealth Visits

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Abstract

Telehealth has become an increasingly important part of health care delivery, with a dramatic rise in telehealth visits during the COVID-19 pandemic. Telehealth visits will continue to be a part of care delivery after the pandemic subsides, and it is important that medical students receive training in telehealth skills to meet emerging telehealth competencies. This paper describes strategies for successfully integrating medical students into telehealth visits in the ambulatory setting based on existing literature and the extensive experience of the authors teaching and learning in the telehealth environment.

Introduction

Telehealth and *telemedicine* are terms that are used interchangeably in much of the existing literature and have become an increasingly important part of health care in the last several decades [1]. Telehealth or virtual visits are defined as live, synchronous, interactive encounters between a patient and a health care provider through video, telephone, or live chat [2]. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly accelerated the use of telehealth visits to improve patient access to care and minimize risks to patients and health care providers [3,4], and even after the pandemic subsides, telehealth will remain an important and growing modality for care delivery [5]. The benefits of telehealth include increased access to care in remote or rural areas, mitigation of workforce shortages, improved chronic disease management, and improved health outcomes [6].

Given the rise in telehealth, it is important to prepare medical students for effective participation in telehealth visits and share best practices for integrating students into telehealth visits. The 2015-2016 Liaison Committee on Medical Education Annual Medical School Questionnaire reported that over a quarter of US medical schools have implemented telehealth training in their preclinical curriculum and nearly half have implemented it in their clinical curriculum [7]. However, much of the existing literature on telehealth for learners focuses on residents [3,8,9] or telehealth curricular descriptions for medical students [7,10-13]. There is limited but growing literature on integrating medical students into telehealth visits [14-17].

Integrating students into telehealth visits has several potential advantages. It can overcome space limitations in clinical settings, provide opportunities for learners to participate in clinical care at a distance including in settings that may be less accessible (eg, international or rural settings), provide a window

into patients' home environments, and allow students to participate in specialty consultations and interprofessional care. Telehealth provides teachers with opportunities both for direct observation of students' patient communication and physical examination skills and for teaching focused on clinical reasoning [18].

In this paper, we describe strategies for effectively integrating medical students into telehealth visits in the ambulatory setting. We derive our approach from the educational literature and from our extensive experience with direct recommendations for teachers who have integrated or wish to integrate learners into telehealth visits. We have organized our suggestions based on Billett's framework of workplace learning that highlights the importance of pedagogic practices before, during, and after practice-based experiences [19]. We do acknowledge that there is overlap between these categories; however, we feel that it is helpful for teachers to have a framework for approaching the incorporation of learners into telehealth experiences.

Before the Visit

Know Your Telehealth Platform

Facility with your telehealth platform is imperative to maximize time focused on teaching, observation, and learner assessment. Institutional decisions to use encrypted software packages approved for the transmission of protected health information leave health care providers working within the confines of systems and software packages that may be unfamiliar. Institutional training and online tutorials can enhance comfort and skills with specific technology platforms and increase familiarity with system features that may be disabled, enabled, or customized. To build patient trust and facilitate the teaching experience with the learner, it is critical that the teacher is comfortable with the telehealth platform and can troubleshoot challenges in advance of any telehealth visit.

Provide Students With a Telehealth Curriculum That Is Aligned With Telehealth Competencies

The literature describes various telehealth curricula for medical students [7,10,11,13] and residents [3,8,9,20-22]. There has been an attempt to define both general [23] and discipline-specific telehealth competencies at the postgraduate level [8]. The American Association of Medical Colleges recently released telehealth competencies for the recent medical school graduate entering residency, the graduating resident entering practice, and the experienced practicing physician [24]. It is important to note that teachers may not yet have mastered telehealth competencies given the evolving nature of these competencies and the relatively recent expansion of telehealth.

Based on the available literature, telehealth curricula should include the following key content areas: technical skills needed to operate equipment and software, including troubleshooting difficulties; professionalism in telehealth, including review of informed consent and patient privacy; telehealth communication skills [25-27]; physical examination skills in the telehealth environment [28,29]; and affordances and limitations of telehealth visits, including the potential for telehealth to increase disparities in care [30]. It is important to specifically teach and

coach students through sensitive aspects of patient history, which can include eliciting social and mental health histories and intimate partner violence screening [31] and which may be more challenging in the virtual environment. Strategies such as ensuring safety and privacy prior to initiating a telehealth visit by asking simple yes-or-no questions can be taught and modeled for learners, who in turn can be provided with opportunities to practice these skills through roleplay or simulation. Described methods for delivery of telehealth curricula include e-learning, lectures, and small group discussions. In addition, it is essential to provide opportunities for telehealth skills practice with feedback, which can be accomplished using objective structured clinical examinations in a simulated telehealth environment or in the context of patient care [8,10,32].

Prepare Students for Success in the Virtual Visit

The first step to student success in a virtual visit is ensuring access to the appropriate technology and a private space in which to successfully conduct a telehealth visit. There may be disparities in student access to reliable broadband service, and many students may live in shared living spaces without adequate access to the private space needed for a telehealth visit. Medical schools can address these disparities by providing private rooms with Wi-Fi access for students to conduct telehealth visits or through providing Wi-Fi hotspots for learners without access to reliable broadband service.

To contribute to the team and learn most effectively, students require orientation and goal setting at the start of each telehealth session. As Knowles' theory of andragogy outlines, adult learners are self-directed and learn best when engaged in the workplace with authentic roles [33]. In addition, learners involved in formulating task strategies perform better with a higher self-efficacy than those who do not participate in formulating strategies [34]. Establishing a sense of the student's level of medical knowledge and any other core skills required as well as considering the student's prior experience with telehealth will prepare for a more productive session. Choose patients together from the schedule with the highest learning potential and match the patients' demographics, chief complaints, problem list, and presentation complexity with the student's learning goals for the session. Share with the student your history of caring for the patient and any tips or pearls from previous encounters that will help the student. For example, if you know the patient tends to prefer a certain approach, this is helpful to share with the student in advance. Prime the student for success by starting with easier initial tasks. Be specific with expectations by, for example, delineating the amount of time the student should spend on the visit before looping you in again, what tasks the student should accomplish, and how to best communicate with you during the visit.

Leverage Students' Knowledge of Technology

Ramping up to provide virtual care is challenging and may be more difficult for those clinicians who are accustomed to a particular structure and rhythm of in-person clinical visits. In contrast, students are still developing their frameworks for the clinical visit and may be more flexible in their approach. Learners may appreciate the early integration of technology in their learning [35], recognizing the significant role that telehealth

will play in future outpatient care delivery. Millennials, defined as those individuals born between 1981 and 2000, currently constitute the majority of medical students. They have been shaped by a profound expansion of information technology, and their facility with various hardware, platforms, and apps can be time-saving in the telehealth work environment. Millennial learners embrace collaboration, and they thrive in flat rather than pyramidal structures [36]. Inviting a student to share with the team what they know about how to best use technology in the context of telehealth visits will strengthen the learning climate and invite collaborative learning. As Generation Z students (those born between 1997 and 2012) soon emerge among our trainees, an even more technology-focused generation will challenge us to once again rethink our relationship to technology and the ways educational practice in telehealth will necessarily evolve.

Address Disparities in Telehealth Utilization

Although the use of telehealth visits has increased dramatically, this trend has been disproportionately generated by young, non-Hispanic White patients. Patients over 65 years, those whose primary language is not English, and those insured by Medicare or Medicaid all saw a decrease in health care utilization when practices shifted from in-person to virtual care in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic [30]. As medical training and health care delivery become more virtual, medical students will have an increasingly important role in addressing disparities in access to health care. Teachers can encourage their students to engage in local efforts to improve broadband and mobile device access in underserved communities and to challenge health system barriers to telehealth access. Support for this work can be provided through systems-improvement projects or elective courses. For example, students can reach out to those most in need of connection, such as more frail older adults, screen them for mood disorders, and connect them with community resources. In the clinical setting, teachers should prompt students to proactively reach out to patients whose primary language is not English to check if they need assistance accessing virtual care by ensuring adequate access to interpreters in the visit, screening patients for privacy or technical barriers, and teaching patients how to use the telehealth platform before the appointment begins. Addressing disparities in telehealth access is also crucial for learner development. Medical trainees' preparedness to deliver cross-cultural care often trails other clinical milestones [37], but exposure to and discussion of health care disparities in medical school has been linked to improvements in that preparedness [38]. Development of formal curricula to adapt cultural humility and antiracism training for virtual care and role modeling these within the virtual workplace will both be imperative in this new era of medical education.

During the Visit

Establish and Model "Webside Manner"

Connection means more than just establishing a video or telephone connection between you, the patient, and the student. Most in-person visits to a medical provider involve some physical interaction, such as a handshake or other nonverbal interaction. Virtual visits have changed that dynamic, requiring

new strategies for "webside manner" to establish this extremely important personal connection. To address these challenges in communication and opportunities for relationship building, the authors of the Stanford Presence 5 [26] adapted their original evidence-based practices to help clinicians foster humanism during clinical encounters for telehealth visits [26]. Body positioning, eye contact, nodding, smiling to demonstrate a listening posture, and allowing extra pauses before speaking to account for lag time are particularly important when engaging in a telehealth visit, especially with three or more participants (patient, teacher, and student) [39]. To allow for optimal visualization of body language, position the camera in a way that allows others to see your torso and arms and use gestures as you would in person but keep the gestures in the square of your body (ie, closer to your shoulder). Be mindful that gestures may appear more unnatural with virtual backgrounds. Although it is natural to look at participants' faces and video on the screen, from the perspective of the student or patient, this does not come across as direct eye contact. Try to maintain direct eye contact by looking at the camera when you are speaking. Consider putting something next to the camera lens that will remind you to focus your gaze there and close other computer windows to minimize distractions.

Adapt the Students' Authentic Roles To Be Commensurate With Their Clinical Developmental Stage

To establish an inviting virtual learning climate, you can start to iteratively develop the student's telehealth skills. Telehealth provides a rich opportunity for the student to join the greater community of practice [40], as they quickly learn competencies ranging from medical knowledge to systems-based practice. Consider the gradient of competency in the many domains within telehealth just as you would a continuum of competency in medical knowledge. Eventually the student might participate in all aspects of telehealth, including preparing for the session with appropriate technology in place, precharting, obtaining a history, completing a virtual physical exam, and providing patient education with anticipatory guidance. However, these steps might be considered building blocks and can be approached stepwise with supported participation matching the student's skill development [41]. Initially, students might listen in by telephone or video with the teacher and patient. As familiarity with the basic technical tools required to conduct a visit grows, the student can engage in independent communication with the patient for a portion of the encounter. One helpful framework to consider the student's skills and developmental progress is the Reporter, Interpreter, Manager, Educator framework [42], which describes the progression of student skills during the clinical clerkship year. For students in the reporter stage, eliciting an initial history in the telehealth visit might be an appropriate task, while students in the manager stage might be able to wrap up the visit with the patient, communicating the plan and next steps with faculty supervision. These expectations should be discussed with the learner as part of the previsit preparation. Students may also follow up on results of laboratory examinations and studies after the encounter. Frequent feedback and flexibility [43] to gauge

competency while cultivating a growth mindset will allow the student to progress across multiple competencies.

Ensure "Sidelines Communication"

It is worth recognizing that when students and teachers work together in person, they have frequent points of contact. It is therefore important during telehealth sessions to preserve and promote opportunities for the student and teacher to communicate throughout the session. Dialogue is an important tool for building trust between students and teachers and can shift the power dynamic to provide students with a sense of expertise and autonomy [44]. The day-to-day interactions between students and teachers give teachers the opportunity to shape and understand the identity and roles of the medical students and provide students the dynamic to develop their professional identity [45]. It is therefore not surprising that medical students highly value having teachers who are readily available [44]. Agree on a private and reliable messaging platform for "sidelines communication" during the clinic session to communicate about timing, address questions, or provide support. Options include secure text messaging, computer communication platforms, phone calls, and videoconferencing chat functions. Which sidelines communication method you choose should be dictated by institutional privacy guidelines to comply with regulations such as the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), institutional technical fire walls, and personal preference. Regardless of which sidelines communication you use, establishing a clear communication workflow allows students greater independence and teachers more efficient use of time while maintaining appropriate supervision.

Foster Relationships: Engage the Patient and the Student Within the Virtual Environment

Telehealth visits provide both additional challenges and opportunities for provider–patient communication and relationship building between the student, teacher, and patient. When reflecting on telehealth visits, patients report difficulty finding opportunities to speak, a sense that providers pay less attention to them, and an inability to establish a connection with their provider [46]. However, telehealth visits also present an opportunity to engage with patients in their own environments. At the beginning of the telehealth visit, extra consideration should be given to student introductions and consent, as creating a connection can be more difficult virtually. Best practices for in-person interactions, such as exploration of emotional cues, use of open-ended questions, and the teach-back method [47], should be adapted, modeled, and encouraged during virtual interactions. Similarly, relationship-centered care can also still be achieved through telehealth visits [48]. After first ensuring safety, privacy, and appropriate occasion, engaging in the patient, student, or provider's home environments can allow for a greater connection. Family members previously unable to attend office appointments can be involved, while pets or other important facets of patients' lives can add depth to the interaction. Lastly, be aware of virtual meeting fatigue that results from not having full access to nonverbal cues and the mental fatigue that results from having to process the accumulation of these important missing elements of in-person

social interaction [49]. Engaging in relationship building and focusing on mindful communication can help prevent burnout within more virtual clinical and teaching environments [50].

Build In Opportunities To Teach and Observe the Virtual Physical Exam

Eliciting student learning goals in advance of the session will provide you with a focus for your teaching and observation. If the student identifies questions about how to perform an exam maneuver in your previsit conversation, take time to consider together how to most effectively perform the exam during the encounter. Even the more challenging maneuvers can be conducted over video or telephone. Plan in advance which specific examination maneuvers the student will perform and how to communicate the instructions for the exam to the patient. Consider with the student what can be gleaned from the encounter: how the patient tells their story; aspects of the history that help build the differential diagnosis; which data are available from wearable devices; or what findings can result from the "Telehealth Ten," a patient-assisted clinical examination to help guide providers in their physical examination and clinical reasoning over telemedicine [28]. Clerkship students have noted that they appreciate timely feedback during the telehealth encounter or right after the visit, and virtual exam skills observation allows for a focused discussion around behaviors the student can keep, start, or stop doing [14]. During the visit, it may become clear that the symptoms discussed or signs noted in the virtual examination require transition to an in-person visit. Preparing the student for this possibility by explicitly exploring it with the student in advance and discussing what options exist for transitioning patients to in-person visits will allow the student to consider the opportunities and limitations of the telehealth encounter. Additionally, modeling for the student how to approach this conversation with the patient provides another opportunity for student learning.

After the Visit

Ensure a Post-Session Huddle: Set Aside Time To Debrief and Give Feedback

As the closing guidepost on the telehealth journey with the student, a postsession huddle creates the opportunity to reflect on the visit, share feedback with the student based on their identified goals, and create a plan or a Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound (SMART) goal [51] for the next telehealth visit and the time between visits. Whether you are working with a student for two sessions or twenty-two sessions, providing feedback in the moment based on your observations can help to stimulate the student's growth mindset and enhance the telehealth learning experience [52]. Having a feedback dialogue in a postsession online huddle without the patient present allows the teacher to share reinforcing and redirecting feedback based on their observations [14]. One potential structure for the postsession huddle is the "ask-tell-ask framework" [53]. First, ask the student to reflect on their own performance and then share (tell) your specific observations and feedback on the student's performance and developing telehealth skills. You can share your screen in the virtual

platform to highlight any particular observations. After sharing your thoughts, ask the student for their reaction to your feedback. Close the postsession huddle with a request to the student to generate a SMART goal or a plan about how to continue progressing in their telehealth skills development. Students may share their SMART goal via electronic messaging or through a shared platform for tracking student goals and progress.

Engage in Virtual Care Across Specialties

When patients are seen by other health care providers, either in a different specialty or profession, it is often difficult for students to participate in-person if these appointments occur in different locations. Telehealth provides an opportunity for students to more readily join visits across departments with health care providers of diverse specialties and professions, enhancing opportunities for building longitudinal relationships with patients. Through active participation in patient care in different settings, the student can bridge health care providers across specialties and benefit from experiential learning, constructing knowledge and meaning from an authentic experience [41]. Encourage the student to solicit patient and provider permission in advance of joining a visit virtually. Students can provide additional support, navigation, education, and advocacy for patients during virtual visits in different settings [54]. With knowledge of the patient's history and diagnoses, students can share additional background and context for the health care provider. Encourage students to check for patient understanding before, during, and after the visit, as this is particularly important in helping the patient navigate multiple settings and ensuring that the patient and family members have an understanding of the impression and plan from every visit; furthermore, it provides the student with a better perspective of the patient's care experience.

Conclusions

It is clear that telehealth visits will continue to be an expanding modality for the provision of care in the future. Consequently, medical students will need to be trained to meet telehealth competencies, and teachers will need to be able to coach medical students in these important skills. Creating opportunities for students to engage in telehealth visits using the above outlined best practices will provide them with opportunities to practice telehealth skills safely and effectively with guidance and feedback from prepared teachers.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound

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Viewpoint

An Imperative for the National Public Health School in Burkina Faso to Promote the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Background: Several studies have reported the positive impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on academic performance and outcomes. Although some equipment is available, the ICTs for education at the National Public Health School (NPHS) of Burkina Faso have many shortcomings. These shortcomings were clearly revealed during the search for responses to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, to curb the spread of COVID-19, some measures were taken, such as closure of educational institutions. This resulted in a 2.5-month suspension of educational activities. Despite its willingness, the NPHS was unable to use ICTs to continue teaching during the closure period of educational institutions.

Objective: In this paper, we aim to propose practical solutions to promote ICT use in teaching at the NPHS by analyzing the weaknesses and challenges related to its use.

Methods: We conducted a critical analysis based on information from the gray literature of NPHS. This critical analysis was preceded by a review of systematic reviews on barriers and facilitating factors to using ICTs in higher education and a systematic review of ICT use during the COVID-19 pandemic in higher education. An ICT integration model and a clustering of ICT integration factors guided the analysis.

Results: The weaknesses and challenges identified relate to the infrastructure and equipment for the use of ICTs in pedagogical situations in face-to-face and distance learning; training of actors, namely the teachers and students; availability of qualified resource persons and adequate and specific financial resources; motivation of teachers; and stage of use of ICTs.

Conclusions: To promote the use of ICTs in teaching at the NPHS, actions must be performed to strengthen the infrastructure and equipment, human resources, the skills of actors and the motivation of teachers in the pedagogical use of ICTs.

Introduction

The rapid evolution of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has led to the development of applications for use in everyday life and in all activity sectors [1]. Faced with this development, the integration of ICTs has become a necessity in education systems [2]. In Burkina Faso, the National Public Health School (NPHS) began integrating and promoting ICTs in education approximately 10 years ago. This integration

has resulted in the establishment of infrastructures and training of actors [3].

Located within West Africa, the country of Burkina Faso covers an area of 274,200 km^2. It is subdivided into 13 regions, 45 provinces, 350 departments, and 351 municipalities [4]. The number of students per 100,000 inhabitants has increased from 336 in 2009-2010 to 600 in 2017-2018. Under the Education Guidance Act, the education system in Burkina Faso is organized into formal, nonformal, informal, and special education [5].

Since the 1980s, numerous private and public actions have been implemented to integrate ICTs in education in Burkina Faso [6]. The development of skills and abilities for the widespread use of ICTs is one of the challenges faced by the higher education system in Burkina Faso [4].

The NPHS is ranked in the Higher School category, which is a component of higher education. Its main mission is to ensure training of midwives and paramedical staff in primary and specialized fields to benefit the public and the private sector. The NPHS is organized as follows: the Board of Directors, which holds the highest administrative responsibility; and the Executive Board, which directs and coordinates all institution activities. The Executive Board includes the central and regional directorates. There are 10 regional directorates. In addition to the regional directorates, the Directorate of Higher Education in Health Science (DHEHS) is responsible for specialized training of paramedical and midwifery personnel. Each regional directorate and the DHEHS has the following work stations: a secretariat; a pedagogical service; training services; a school life service; two control rooms; and an administrative and financial service [3].

In 2006, the West African Health Organization, together with its member countries, including Burkina Faso, initiated harmonization of curricula. This harmonization, which adopted the Bachelor-Master-Doctorate (BMD) system in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is seen as a means of regulating the training and career development of health professionals [7]. The harmonization began with the curricula for nurses and midwives, which were approved and adopted in 2010 by ECOWAS Health Ministers. From 2011, the NPHS entered into this process of harmonizing basic and postbasic training curricula. It then embarked on implementing the BMD system, starting with the nursing and midwifery streams. In the institution's progression toward effective application of the BMD system, ICTs are of paramount importance. In this sense, the NPHS has equipped itself with a videoconferencing system installed in all the regional directorates except in the recently established ones of Dédougou, Ziniaré, and Banfora. This system enables video conferencing and distance learning to benefit the institution's trainers [3].

In the absence of a strategy document, it is not easy to obtain a clear picture of the design and process for implementing ICTs in teaching at the NPHS. Literature reports show that the use or integration of ICTs in education requires policy or strategies [8]. Pedagogical integration or use of ICTs in teaching refers not only to the educational institution equipment and networking

but also to the appropriate, usual, and regular use of ICTs by teachers and students to support and enhance teaching and learning [9]. The use of ICTs in teaching can occur in a face-to-face educational situation and/or in a distance pedagogical situation in synchronous and/or asynchronous mode [10-27].

The shift to distance education can help institutions cope with unexpected situations, such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most universities have moved to web-based distance learning in synchronous and/or asynchronous environments [10-27]. Several countries, including Burkina Faso, have imposed closure of educational and training institutions to ensure the respecting of physical distancing measures and to reduce the risk of contamination [10-27]. Although in some countries, this situation has led several educational structures to optimize the use of the potential of ICTs to provide e-learning to students, this has not been possible at the NPHS [28].

NPHS officials were unable to maintain teaching continuity due to inadequate and obsolete equipment [29] and poor preparation. This suspension of educational activities has had many consequences for students, teachers, and NPHS officials. Given the magnitude of these consequences, upgrading and promoting the effective use of ICT in education is becoming imperative for the NPHS, especially in the case of a second wave. This crisis also creates the opportunity for all systems to look to the future, adapt to possible threats, and strengthen their capacity [30].

The goal of this paper is to enable the NPHS and educational structures that are in a similar situation to exploit the potential offered by ICTs, through proposals for solutions, to improve the quality of training and to be able to address unexpected situations such as those generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

To perform the critical analysis, we first carried out two rapid systematic reviews. The methodology followed PRISMA-P (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols) [31]. The first review was a review of systematic reviews. Systematic reviews published between 2017 and 2021 that examined encountered difficulties in ICT use in higher education and strategies to overcome these difficulties were included. Systematic reviews on ICT use in primary or secondary schools or on individual courses or specific aspects such as gender were excluded. We searched three electronic bibliographic databases (ERIC, CINAHL, and PubMed) to identify systematic reviews focused on barriers and facilitators in using ICT in higher education. We used the following terms to develop the search strategies: *students*, *learners*, *teachers*, *trainers*, *educators*, *manager*, *higher education*, *university*, *information and communication technologies for education*, *ICT for education*, *web-based learning*, *e-learning*, *distance education*, *computerized technological resources*, *online learning*, *virtual classroom*, *virtual class*, *remote education*, *remote instruction*, *internet use for education*, *access to ICT*, *use of ICT*, *the capacity of use*,

perceived usefulness, *barriers*, *facilitating factors*, and *systematic review*.

The search strategy for the PubMed database was as follows: ("Students" [MeSH] OR "Learners" OR "Teachers" OR "Trainers" OR "Campus managers" OR "Directors" OR "Education, Graduate" [MeSH] OR "Universities" [MeSH] OR "Faculty" [MeSH]) **AND** ("Information and communication technologies for education" OR "ICT for education" OR "Web-based learning" OR "E-learning" OR "Distance education" OR "Distance Learning" [MeSH] OR "Learning, Distance" [MeSH] OR "Computerized technological resources"

OR "Online Learning" [MeSH] OR "Learning, Online" [MeSH] OR "Online Education" [MeSH] OR "Remote Education" OR "Remote instruction" OR "Virtual classes" OR "Virtual classroom" OR "Integration of ICT" OR "ICT" OR "Internet use" [MeSH] OR "Computer User Training" [MeSH]) **AND** ("Access to ICT" OR "Use of ICT" OR "Capacity of use" OR "Perceived usefulness" OR "Barriers" OR "Facilitating factors"). This strategy was adapted for use in the ERIC and CINAHL bibliographic databases.

Figure 1 illustrates the study selection process for the first literature review.

Figure 1. Adapted PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols) flow diagram to show the results of the searches in the first literature review. ICT: information and communications technology.
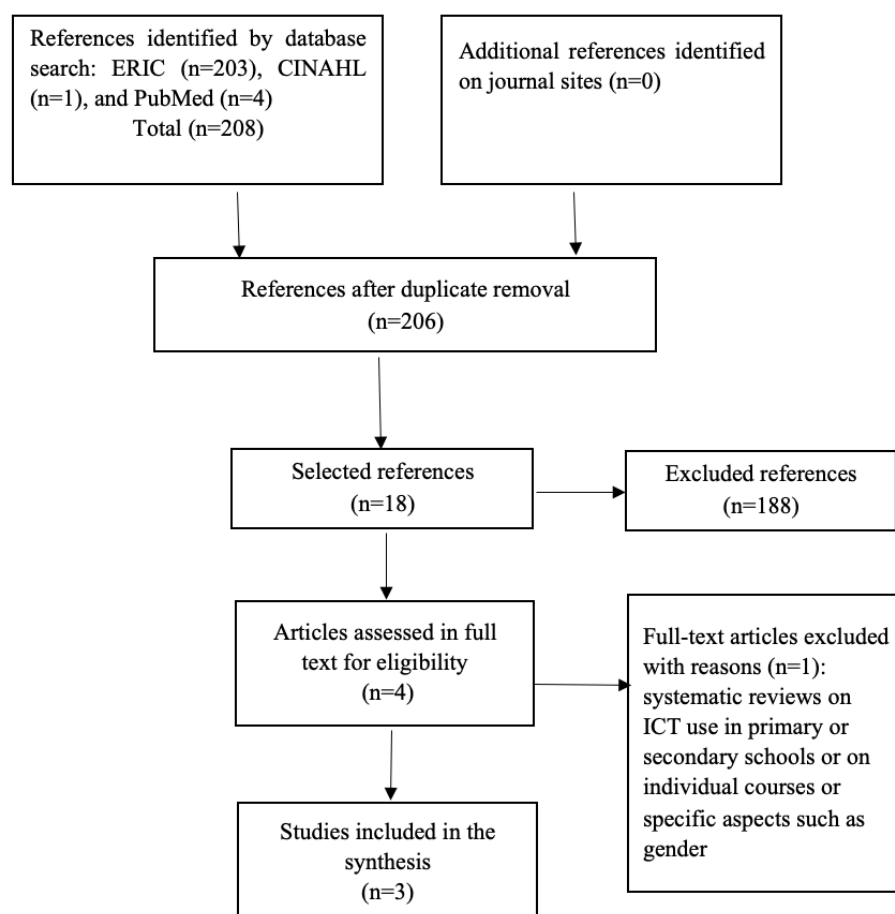
In the second literature review, we included published articles from 2020 to 2021 with primary data describing the use of ICTs during the COVID-19 pandemic in universities, faculties, and colleges. We excluded editorials, commentaries, and articles reporting experiences with web-based distance education and learning of specific courses, implementation projects, or web-based distance education evaluations. For this purpose, we searched three databases (ERIC, CINAHL, and PubMed). The following terms were used to develop the research strategies: *students*, *learners*, *teachers*, *trainers*, *educators*, *manager*, *higher education*, *university*, *COVID-19*, *information and communication technologies for education*, *ICT for education*, *web-based learning*, *e-learning*, *distance education*, *computerized technological resources*, *online learning*, *virtual classroom*, *virtual class*, *remote education*, *remote instruction*,

internet use for education, *access to ICT*, *use of ICT*, *the capacity of use*, *perceived usefulness*, *confirmation of expectations*, *students' satisfaction*, *knowledge*, *attitudes*, *practice*, and *students' engagement*.

The search strategy for the PubMed database was as follows: ("Students" [MeSH] OR "Learners" OR "Teachers" OR "Trainers" OR "Campus managers" OR "Directors" OR "Education, Graduate" [MeSH] OR "Universities" [MeSH] OR "Faculty" [MeSH] OR "COVID-19" [MeSH]) **AND** ("Information and communication technologies for education" OR "ICT for education" OR "Web-based learning" OR "E-learning" OR "Distance education" OR "Distance Learning" [MeSH] OR "Learning, Distance" [MeSH] OR "Computerized technological resources" OR "Online Learning" [MeSH] OR "Learning, Online" [MeSH] OR "Online Education" [MeSH]

OR "Remote Education" OR "Remote instruction" OR "Virtual classes" OR "Virtual classroom" OR "Integration of ICT" OR "ICT" OR "Internet use" [MeSH] OR "Computer User Training" [MeSH]) **AND** ("Access to ICT" OR "Use of ICT" OR "Capacity of use" OR "Perceived usefulness" OR "Confirmation of expectations" OR "Student satisfaction" OR "Health knowledge, attitudes, practice" OR "Health Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice" [MeSH] OR "Student engagement" OR "Academic Success" [MeSH] OR "Learning" OR "Professional Competence" [MeSH] OR "mental competency" [MeSH] OR "Skills"). This strategy was adapted for use in the ERIC and CINAHL bibliographic databases.

Figure 2 illustrates the study selection process for the second literature review.

The database search results were stored in a single reference manager software (Zotero). Duplicate references were removed. Titles and abstracts of the review papers retrieved using the search strategy were screened.

A standardized data extraction form was developed, piloted, and used to extract data from the full text of the included publications. In addition to the general characteristics of the studies, we extracted data regarding the use of ICTs in teaching, learning, and the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in high schools.

An ICT integration model and a clustering type of ICT integration factors guided the data synthesis. The information concerning the NPHS was taken from the gray literature of the institution.

Figure 2. Adapted PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols) flow diagram to show the results of the searches in the second literature review.
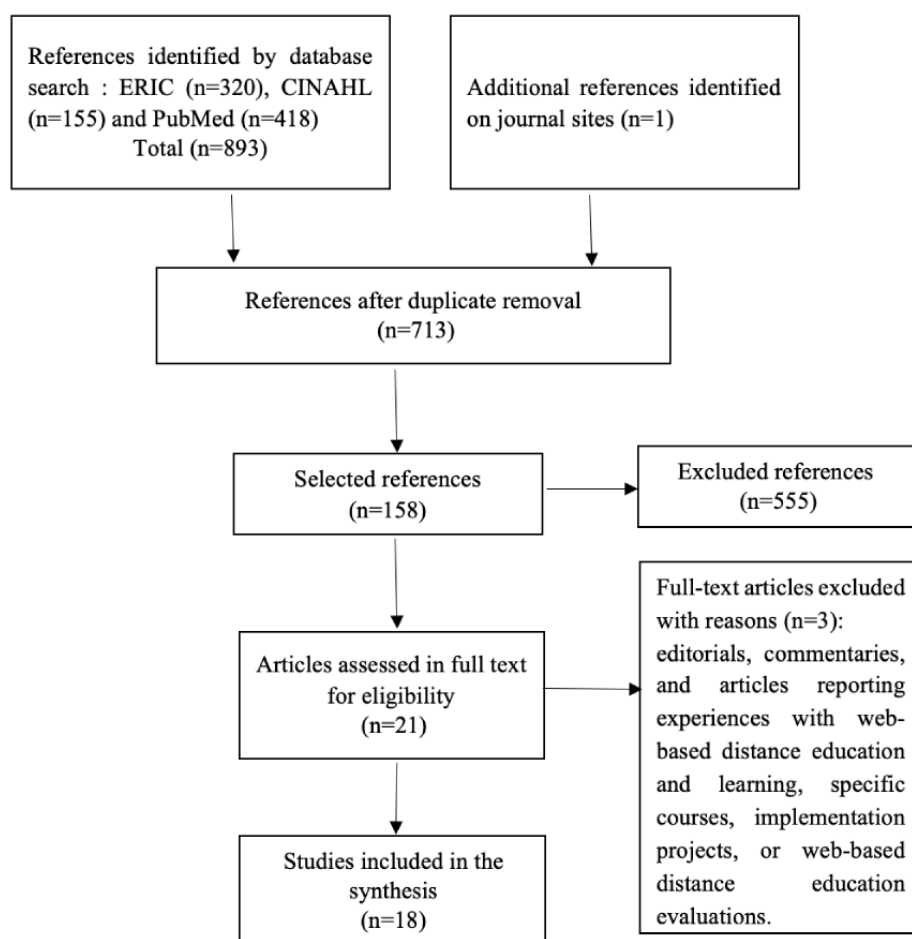
Results

Literature Reviews

In the first systematic review on barriers and facilitators of ICT use in higher education, a search of the three databases identified 208 articles. We deemed 3 articles to be relevant. The articles included are those by Webb et al [8], Regmi et al [32], and Atmacasoy et al [33]; the selected systematic reviews date from 2017, 2018, and 2020, respectively. Of these reviews, 2 were conducted in the United Kingdom [8,32] and 1 in Turkey [33].

The 3 systematic reviews included 128 articles and 10 theses [8,32,33].

For the second systematic review on the use of ICTs in higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic, 893 articles were retrieved from the databases. The search of websites of specialized journals yielded 1 additional article, for a total of 894 articles. We deemed 18 articles to be relevant. The articles included are those of van der Keylen et al [10], Soy-Muner [11], Daniel [12], Moszkowicz et al [13], Yılmaz et al [14], Al-Balas et al [15], Sharma [16], George [17], Kim et al [18], Sabharwal

et al [19], Sutiah et al [20], Scull et al [21], Barik et al [22], Khalaf [23], Mansoor [24], Ibrahim et al [25], Lowenthal et al [26], and Chick et al [27]. Of these 18 articles, 8 are from Asia, 4 from America, 4 from Europe, 1 from Africa, and 1 from Oceania. All these articles were published in 2020. Most of the studies first presented a section that describes the use of ICTs during the COVID-19 pandemic and another section devoted to assessment.

Web-Based Distance Education in Higher Education

ICTs are used in higher education to achieve web-based distance education and learning. The blended learning mode is the most widely used. A systematic review [32], which included 21 articles and 10 theses, reported that most web-based distance education studies focused on a blended learning environment via Moodle. Moodle is a free learning management system for creating flexible and engaging web-based experiences or a website specifically designed for a blended learning course. Blended learning is defined as a combination of learning delivery methods, including face-to-face teaching with asynchronous or synchronous computer technologies [32]. Some of the descriptions of the components of blended learning are as follows [32]:

- Carious web technology tools are combined, such as live virtual classrooms, collaborative learning and streaming video.
- An optimal learning outcome is achieved with or without instructional technology by combining different pedagogical approaches, such as constructivism, behaviorism, and cognitivism.
- Any form of instructional technology (eg, videotape, CD-ROM, e-learning, and film) is combined with face-to-face instruction.
- Instructional technology is combined with real-world tasks to support work-based learning.

Blended learning has brought several benefits, mainly due to the successful merging of face-to-face and web-based aspects by making resources more accessible. It promotes the student-centered approach by providing various materials, increasing participation, and fostering student-student and teacher-student interaction. In addition, it provides timely feedback and creates a ground for synchronous and asynchronous discussions [32].

Encountered Difficulties in Web-Based Distance Learning

Encountered difficulties in web-based distance education in higher education are related to personal, institutional, and pedagogical factors.

Personal Factors

Personal factors relate to teachers and students' motivation and commitment to using ICTs in teaching and learning [34].

One of the reported personal factors is teacher anxiety due to the considerable importance of using ICTs in blended learning [32]. Students also have high levels of anxiety and stress related to the use of ICTs in learning. These high levels of anxiety and stress are due to inappropriate equipment and technological illiteracy [8].

Another difficulty related to personal factors is low motivation or lack of enthusiasm of teachers and students for educational technology [8,33]. Low motivation about web-based distance education refers to low commitment, poor perception, limited flexibility, lack of student self-discipline, low self-efficacy, and poor interaction between learners and facilitators [8].

Institutional Factors

Institutional factors include creating an adequate pedagogical environment that enables teachers to apply ICT in teaching methods [34].

A systematic review has highlighted some of the barriers that threaten the construction of effective blended learning environments. These barriers include infrastructure problems, connection failures and slow internet access, technical problems, and lack of personal computers [32,33]. Lack of internal support for ICT use is also a concern for both students and faculty [33].

In one review, 9 out of 24 articles reported that e-learning is a time-, cost-, and labor-intensive approach. Insufficient resources are a significant barrier. A total of 8 out of 24 articles identified the lack of a computer or user-friendly computer as one of the main challenges to successful e-learning [8].

It was also pointed out that problems related to cost and availability of resources in the long term raise concerns for ensuring quality, user-friendliness, and distance education and learning effectiveness. In addition, insufficient consideration of users' needs and lack of time are barriers that will negatively impact e-learning [8].

Pedagogical Factors

Pedagogical factors take into account the technical abilities of teachers to use a computer. To this end, teachers must design teaching materials and produce courses with multimedia support to support and facilitate student learning [34].

The most frequently encountered barriers are lack of teachers' computer skills [33], poor course structure, poor instructional design, absence of clear objectives, limited use of technology in teaching, and insufficient teacher training [8]. Indeed, the university staff is also concerned about the lack of training and time needed to develop asynchronous learning regimes and invest more ICT resources in their teaching [33]. At the learner level, several articles also raised technological or computer challenges. Indeed, many learners are not familiar with e-learning, and in some contexts, they even lack basic computer literacy [8].

Another obstacle identified is related to the fact that web-based distance learning is not suitable for all disciplines or contents. A total of 8 of 24 papers reported that integrating learning into existing programs would be problematic, as some disciplines would take a long time for learners and facilitators to adapt the content in e-learning programs. Moreover, several articles reported that some content may be unsuitable for e-learning, but some content may not be appropriate because these

disciplines need practical or demonstrative types of learning [8].

Strategies to Overcome the Difficulties Encountered in Web-Based Distance Education

To overcome the difficulties encountered in web-based distance education, the development of appropriate institutional strategies is essential. These institutional strategies could include flexibility of web-based distance education, access to systems, costs, learning styles, training of teachers and learners, and exploitation of local systems management of learning [8].

In addition, human and environmental barriers such as beliefs and motivation of staff and students must be overcome. Substantial financial resources must be mobilized to finance the long-term functioning of web-based distance education and learning systems. Furthermore, faculties or universities should allow time for training of teachers and students and for course content preparation. They should also provide technical support staff and effective systems for web-based distance education [33].

ICT Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The closure of educational institutions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic encourages optimal exploitation of the potential offered by ICTs around the world [10-27]. ICT has been used primarily to provide distance education and learning on the web. All of the studies included in this systematic review described using ICT in universities during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide distance teaching and learning or education on the web [10-27].

Most studies have reported that the synchronous and asynchronous use of web-based distance teaching and learning is the option chosen by universities [10-13], [16,17], [19,20], [23-27]. This choice could be explained by the fact that web-based learning works best when the material designed, used asynchronously by students, is associated with synchronous class discussions [12]. Teaching synchronous and asynchronous learning consists of live lectures and pre-recorded lectures or SMS text messages made available to students [10-13], [16,17], [19,20], [24-27]. The videoconferencing method can be applied to clinical lessons and anatomy lessons [13].

A total of 2 studies described the option provided by universities to realize web-based distance learning and teaching in synchronous form. This uniquely synchronous web-based distance learning occurs through live teleconferences or webinars and through educational meetings held on different web platforms [18,21].

Only one study reported web-based distance learning education by a university in the asynchronous form through video applications. The option of the exclusively asynchronous form was made due to constraints following the synchronous form [25].

A useful resource in face-to-face teaching restrictions is that of a very detailed workbook-type text. The text presents elements for all of the course topics using step-by-step solutions to problems and diagrams. Practical questions and their answers are presented at the end of each chapter. This resource is made available to students for download [16].

Beyond lessons, ICTs have been used to conduct examinations or train students by remote evaluations [16,22,24]. An app is used in combination with a browser for written examinations. Oral examinations are organized as web-based meetings [22]. Simulated web-based quizzes are also sent to students to enable them to answer structured questions and to familiarize them with the web-based examinations [16].

To be effective, adoption of early web-based distance education and learning by universities must meet certain conditions. Comprehensive web-based teaching and learning require rich lesson plan design and quality and engaging instructional content supported by audio and video content with strong technology support teams. The smooth migration to web-based teaching and learning requires the implementation of an educational policy of (1) grouping and reorganizing course content into smaller, more understandable units to help students navigate, focus, and understand; (2) emphasizing the use of "modulation, inflexion, pitch and timbre of the voice" in web-based education; (3) training the faculty, because the technical specifications of web-based education are much higher than those of traditional classroom instruction for inexperienced faculty members who deliver educational content on the web for the first time; (4) reinforcing students' active learning skills, as compared to traditional lessons, teachers have less control over web-based instruction, and students are more likely to avoid lessons; (5) developing the concept of web-based and offline self-learning [27].

Discussion

Principal Findings and Recommendations

The NPHS should exploit the potential of ICTs to avoid the total suspension of educational activities for approximately 2.5 months. Early leaders thought about this but soon encountered the limitations of using ICTs in teaching in their institution. It is this suspension of educational activities at NPHS for a long time during the COVID-19 pandemic that motivated this critical analysis.

The results of the review of systematic reviews indicate that ICTs have long been used in higher education in blended learning modalities [32]. Difficulties are encountered in web-based distance learning. These difficulties include the anxiety and lack of motivation of teachers and students, insufficient pedagogical and teachers' computer skills, insufficient connection to the internet, lack of time for teachers, insufficient infrastructure and equipment, insufficient human and financial resources, and insufficient computer skills among students [8,32,33]. Solutions to overcome these difficulties have been suggested. These solutions involve developing appropriate institutional strategies, the motivation of the main actors, the mobilization of financial resources, and the strengthening of infrastructure and equipment [8,33]. The systematic review shows that the use of ICTs in higher education has intensified and spread with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several universities or faculties have moved to web-based distance

education and learning in a synchronous or asynchronous environment [10-27]. One of the difficulties of using ICT in higher education linked to personal factors is low motivation or lack of enthusiasm for educational technology teachers and students [8,33]. The integration of ICTs is an innovation whose application requires the motivation of teachers [33]. The NPHS also encounters this difficulty because the motivation of teachers to use ICT is nonexistent. The evaluation of lessons that could encourage, value, and reward teachers is not implemented [3].

To remedy teachers' lack of motivation to use ICTs effectively [33], the authors recommend that the NPHS develop strategies to recognize and value the teaching profession using ICTs. One strategy could be course evaluation followed by rewards for the best teachers. In addition, teachers' involvement in decision-making concerning ICT use in education must be strengthened because it is also a motivating factor [33]. The obstacles that threaten the construction of effective blended learning environments include infrastructure problems, connection failures and slow internet access, technical problems, and a lack of personal computers [32,33]. In short, there is no conducive educational environment for teachers to apply ICT to teaching techniques. The educational environment should be accompanied by equipment of teachers with technopedagogical tools, the establishment of adequate infrastructure and equipment, and the establishment and training of teachers and students in the educational applications of ICTs. A favorable educational environment requires the creation of a structure that is responsible for the educational integration of ICTs to provide leadership to general or regional management [35].

At the NPHS, teachers do not have computers or accessories such as USB keys, servers, cables, connection wires, telecommunications links, videoconferencing equipment, and networks or operating software [3] to enable the educational integration of ICTs in their professional practice. Pending the development and implementation of a specific plan to respond to the lack of infrastructure and equipment and the poor access to a fluid and permanent internet connection, the authors of the article recommend that the NPHS build infrastructures and equip the regional offices with distance education facilities, high-speed internet access systems, and other ICT equipment of sufficient quantity and quality [33]. These investments can be made through advocacy with the Ministry of Health and technical and financial partners. In addition, the NPHS must facilitate the acquisition of computer and pericomputer equipment by students and teachers. Students' acquisition of computer equipment could be facilitated by pleading with the president of Burkina Faso for the inclusion of NPHS students in the "one student, one computer" program. This program aims to provide each participating student with a computer at a subsidized price. In fact, a study showed that the "one student, one computer" program was effective [36]. A special operation focusing on flexible payment terms could be organized to provide permanent teachers with computers. It has also been pointed out that issues related to the cost and availability of long-term resources raise concerns to ensure quality, usability, distance education, and learning efficiency [8]. The availability of substantial financial resources is essential to ensure the permanent functioning of ICTs and address the costs of maintenance and renewal of

technological equipment. Fundraising or providing adequate, equitable, and stable funding is essential to acquire technological resources [37]. At the NPHS, adequate and specific financial resources for using ICTs in education are not available [3]. The administration of the NPHS and active help from partners and parents can help subsidize the internet subscription and the ICT equipment [37]. Technological infrastructure requires regular and consistent funding, mainly because of the rapid pace of technological change [38]. In addition, ICT equipment is not regularly renewed due to a lack of funding. For example, none of the 23 initial computers in the computer room of the regional office of the NPHS in Ouagadougou is currently functional [39]. In this regional office, it is impossible to access the internet connection despite the installation of modems [39]. To obtain financial resources for the maintenance of ICT equipment and to ensure a permanent subscription to an internet connection and the renewal of ICT equipment [33,38], the authors of the article advise the NPHS to dedicate a specific budget line to this objective each year in its action plan [33].

The lack of internal support in terms of specialized human resources for ICT use is also a concern for students and teachers [33]. The availability of qualified resource persons such as an information technology (IT) specialist, a trainer, a tutor or an instructor to provide support and training in ICT to teachers is insufficient [33]. These professionals provide the necessary technical support to students and teachers [33]. Their technical assistance role can facilitate, among other things, research, the creation of a resource bank for teachers and students, and the safe use of equipment [37]. According to some authors, to fully exploit technology, four human resources categories are necessary: technical support staff; media production and management staff; instructional designers; and finally, teachers, professors, or content creators [38].

At the NPHS, this type of staff does not exist in any regional directorate. The only IT specialist recruited, who can be considered as a technical assistant, is assigned to general management [3]. Faced with the lack of human resources, the authors of the article recommend that the general management of the NPHS recruit and make available to the regional offices the necessary resource persons to promote the use of ICTs in education [33]. It would also be advantageous for the NPHS to develop partnerships with training establishments or universities with ICT experience related to education.

The most frequently encountered obstacles are the lack of computer skills of teachers [33], poor course structure, poor instructional design, lack of clarity of objectives, limited use of technology in teaching, and inadequate and insufficient training of teachers [8]. The establishment of adequate infrastructure and equipment must be accompanied by training of teachers and students in the pedagogical applications of ICTs. Teachers must be able to produce teaching materials and lessons with multimedia support to facilitate student learning [35]. No adequate training on the use of ICTs in education has been organized for teachers [8]. This lack of training is not conducive to effective and efficient pedagogical use of ICTs.

The majority of NPHS teachers cannot design teaching materials and produce courses with multimedia support to support and

facilitate student learning. One of the manifestations of this lack of skills is the lack of educational innovation [3]. To improve teachers' ability to reach the stage of pedagogical use of ICTs [9] in teaching, the authors recommend that the NPHS organize training sessions for these teachers [33]. These training sessions should aim to make teachers capable of producing teaching material and multimedia support courses [34]. In addition, teachers must be made aware of the need for self-training. The stage of "pedagogical use" of ICTs begins when the teacher feels a pedagogical curiosity, need, or obligation [9].

All the articles included in the systematic review on the use of ICTs in universities during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that ICTs were used in these settings to ensure distance teaching and learning [10-27]. Only the use of ICTs could offer the possibility for universities to maintain contact with students and to continue certain educational activities during the closure of educational institutions to contribute to the reduction of the spread of the pandemic of COVID-19 [28]. However, the authors of the included articles did not explicitly present the methodology that was employed to describe this use of ICTs [10-27].

The unexpected closure of the NPHS, which resulted in the suspension of educational activities for a long time, had many negative consequences. The NPHS should exploit the potential of ICTs to avoid the total suspension of educational activities for approximately 2.5 months. Early leaders thought about this but soon came up against the limitations of using ICTs in teaching in their institution.

Most studies have reported that the synchronous and asynchronous use of web-based distance teaching and learning is the option chosen by universities [10-13,16,17,19,20,23-27]. This choice could be explained by the fact that web-based learning works best when the material designed to be used by students asynchronously is associated with synchronous class discussions [12]. To begin web-based distance education and learning, the NPHS could opt for the asynchronous form because the synchronous form has many more constraints [25]. This asynchronous use could be achieved by providing students with prerecorded lectures, PowerPoint presentations, or detailed SMS text messages [10-13,16].

To overcome the difficulties encountered in web-based distance education, the development of appropriate institutional strategies is essential [8]. These institutional strategies could include the flexibility of web-based distance education, access to systems, costs, learning styles, training of teachers and learners, and exploitation of local systems management of learning [8]. The implementation of conditions for integrating ICTs in education must be preceded by developing specific policies, strategies, or plans that take this aspect into account [11].

The NPHS does not have a policy document on the integration or use of ICTs in education [3]. In 2019, the NPHS adopted a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for 2020-2024 to continue implementing various reforms. This strategic plan is now the reference tool for training at NPHS during this period. The operational planning of the 2020-2024 SDP is structured chronologically into intervention axes, strategic orientations, effects, products and activities [3].

From the SDP analysis, only one formulated product mentions ICTs in education: "innovative pedagogical strategies, including ICTs, are used." The plan does not include an axis of intervention or strategic orientation about using ICTs in teaching. However, shortcomings in using ICTs in teaching and learning are clearly mentioned in several situational analysis sections of the SDP. Of the 226 activities listed, no activity is dedicated explicitly to ICT use in education [3]. According to the SDP designers, three activities are related to pedagogical innovation, integrating the use of ICTs. These activities specifically concern the development of audiovisual teaching-learning tools, the reinforcement of the capacities of 200 actors on the use of these tools, and the organization of follow-up trips. Beyond the use of these tools, the training should aim at enabling teachers to design teaching materials and produce multimedia courses [34]. One activity concerns the construction of multimedia computer rooms for teachers and students. Another, much more global activity relating to infrastructure maintenance, equipment, and logistics is included in the plan.

Moreover, the SDP does not explicitly provide specific and adequate financial resources related to ICT use in education. These weaknesses demonstrate that ICT use in education does not yet seem to be well understood and is insufficiently implemented. To promote ICT use in education, priority actions are performed according to the weaknesses and challenges identified. In particular, the institutional, personal, and pedagogical factors favoring ICT use in education should be emphasized [8,32,33]. To this end, the NPHS should first include in the SDP at its midterm review a specific intervention strategy or effect with relevant activities related to ICT use in education. The school should then develop a specific plan for ICT use in education [8] with input from experts. Finally, the regional directorate should identify the feasible activities of the plan.

In the systematic review, solutions such as the development of appropriate institutional strategies, the motivation of the main actors, the mobilization of financial resources, and the strengthening of infrastructure and equipment were proposed to overcome difficulties [8,32,33]. However, these solutions have not been broken down into activities that can be easily implemented.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This paper has some limitations. It includes two systematic reviews that were conducted quickly because of a time constraint. The systematic review on barriers and facilitators of ICT use in higher education had a sample of 3 articles because a limited number of articles met the criteria. Nonetheless, these articles reported results from a significant number of primary articles. Detailed results on the barriers to ICT use were found in the included articles. However, the results regarding the factors facilitating ICT use were general and sparse. This insufficiency of detailed and abundant results on the strategies to be implemented to overcome the difficulties requires the realization of additional primary research.

Moreover, the lack of use of specific methodologies in the articles to describe the use of ICTs during the COVID-19 pandemic in education shows that the results must be interpreted

while taking the limitations of the studies into account. For the two systematic reviews, no grey literature search was performed. Relevant studies may have gone unnoticed.

Conclusion

Inadequate quality of training, ongoing reforms at the NPHS, and restrictive measures imposed following the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic indicate the need to promote ICTs in teaching and learning. This promotion should be achieved progressively through rigorous planning and according to available resources. Priority actions should focus on institutional, personal, and pedagogical factors that promote ICT use in education. In-depth knowledge of the use or integration of ICTs in teaching-learning by the institution's officers, teachers, and students and the upgrading of equipment will be essential steps toward the optimal exploitation of ICTs in education at the Burkina Faso NPHS.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

BMD: Bachelor-Master-Doctorate
DHEHS: Directorate of Higher Education in Health Science
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
ICT: information and communication technology

IT: information technology
NPHS: National Public Health School
PRISMA-P: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols
SDP: strategic development plan

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Original Paper

Shared Tobacco Cessation Curriculum Website for Health Professionals: Longitudinal Analysis of User and Utilization Data Over a Period of 15 Years

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Abstract

Background: Because tobacco use is a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide, it is essential to prepare health care providers to assist patients with quitting smoking. Created in 1999, the "Rx for Change" tobacco cessation curriculum was designed to fill an educational gap in cessation training of health professional students. In 2004, a website was launched to host teaching materials and tools to support the efforts of educators and clinicians.

Objective: The objective of this study was to characterize users and utilization of a website hosting shared teaching materials over a period of 15 years.

Methods: Data from the Rx for Change website have been collected prospectively since its inception. In this study, end-user data were analyzed to determine user characteristics, how they heard about the website, intended use of the materials, and numbers of logins and file downloads over time.

Results: Total number of website registrants was 15,576, representing all 50 states in the United States and 94 countries. The most represented discipline was pharmacy (6393/15,505, 41.2%), and nearly half of users were students or residents. The most common source of referral to the website was a faculty member or colleague (33.4%, 2591/7758), and the purpose of enhancing personal knowledge and skills was the most commonly cited intended use of the curricular materials. A total of 259,835 file downloads occurred during the 15-year period, and the most commonly downloaded file type was ancillary handouts.

Conclusions: The Rx for Change website demonstrated sustained use, providing immediate access to tobacco cessation teaching and practice tools for educators and clinicians over the first 15 years of its existence. The website has a broad interprofessional reach, and the consistent utilization over time and large number of downloads provide evidence for the feasibility and utility of a public-access website hosting teaching materials. The shared curriculum approach averts the need for educators to create their own materials for teaching tobacco cessation to students in the health professions.

Introduction

Tobacco use is a major cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide, with more than 8 million deaths each year due to tobacco use or exposure to second-hand smoke [1]. In the United States, more than 480,000 deaths a year are attributable to cigarette smoking; of these, 33% are due to cardiovascular diseases, 27% lung cancer, 23% pulmonary diseases, 9% second-hand smoke, and 7% cancers other than lung [2]. Through multifaceted tobacco control efforts, significant progress has been made over the past several decades to reduce the overall prevalence of cigarette smoking among adults from 40% in 1964 to 14.0% in 2019 [3]. In recent years, however, the emergence of alternative nicotine delivery systems (ANDS; eg, e-cigarettes and other vaping methods) [4] has been reversing the downward trend of tobacco use, with 4.5% of adults reporting current use of e-cigarettes [3] and 20.8% currently using one or more forms of tobacco or ANDS. As such, tobacco use remains a public epidemic, predisposing individuals to an increased risk for developing diseases of virtually every organ system in the body and contributing to rising health care costs [2]. For each pack of cigarettes sold in the United States, the societal costs due to smoking-related health care costs and lost productivity are estimated at US $19.16 per pack, which is around 3 times the cost of the cigarettes [5].

It is well established that clinicians have a proven positive impact on their patients' ability to quit [6]. To achieve reductions in the public health burden of tobacco, the 2020 Surgeon General's report on smoking cessation highlights the importance of clinical interventions by health care providers of all disciplines [7]. Three factors should be considered when attempting to improve quit rates: (1) the efficacy of interventions on patients' ability to quit, (2) fidelity to implementing tobacco cessation interventions in clinical settings, and (3) clinicians' knowledge and skills for treating tobacco use and dependence. In regards to efficacy, research shows that clinician interventions that are based on the 5 A's (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange) are effective and increase quit rates among patients and thus is considered a gold standard for comprehensive counseling [6]. Fidelity considers the extent to which the 5 A's are integrated into practice, in the face of challenges such as lack of time, competing demands, and lack of providers' self-efficacy for tobacco cessation counseling [8]. To mitigate these challenges, investigators have explored creative approaches to enhance the delivery of care (eg, Satterfield and colleagues [9] found that a computer-facilitated 5 A's approach performs better than usual care). The third aspect that can influence quit rates is clinicians' knowledge and skills for providing tobacco cessation interventions. To address this, the "Rx for Change Clinician-Assisted Tobacco Cessation" curriculum was designed, and its corresponding website [10] was launched to host the tobacco cessation teaching and counseling materials. The Rx for Change curriculum, and the website described here, aim to enhance the quality and quantity of tobacco counseling that occurs in clinical practice.

Historically, the extent of tobacco cessation content has been inadequate in all health professional school curricula, including medical [11-15], nursing [16-19], pharmacy [20,21], dental hygiene [22], physical therapy [23], physician assistant [24], and respiratory therapy [25,26]. The evidence-based Rx for Change curriculum was a practical solution to address this decades-long gap [27]. The term "Rx" means prescription, and a "curriculum" is defined as "the totality of student experiences that occur in the educational process" [28]. As such, Rx for Change is a curriculum about tobacco cessation that was designed to teach health professional students and licensed clinicians. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory [29] served as a guiding framework for program design, aiming to enhance the adoptability of the curricular innovation and structure future dissemination strategies. A key strategy for dissemination of Rx for Change occurred via targeted in-person and virtual train-the-trainer workshops for faculty at health professional schools (pharmacy, nursing, medicine, and respiratory care).

To facilitate integration of the Rx for Change curriculum at health professional schools, a public-access website was created to host all of the Rx for Change curricular materials (Figure 1). Several versions of the curriculum exist, each addressing a different clinical specialty for which patients can benefit from tobacco cessation interventions. Learning objectives are provided for each of the program's modules. PowerPoint slides, with detailed instructor notes, and learner handouts are downloadable and can be used by educators to teach in a lecture-based format. Additional teaching materials include dozens of videos (Figure 2), case materials for role playing, ancillary handouts for clinicians and patients, and a suite of tobacco-specific virtual patients. To facilitate assessment of counseling competencies, 6 standardized patient cases were created with associated scoring rubrics for conducting objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs). Tools are also available to assist faculty with implementation of all aspects of the curriculum. The U.S. Surgeon General provides a 3-minute introductory video, highlighting the importance of integrating tobacco cessation into clinical practice (Figure 1).

Educational experts have placed much value on developing effective training programs and have also emphasized the need for program evaluation [30]. Unfortunately, when websites are created to host educational materials, these resources are often short-lived before becoming outdated and dormant after institutional support or grant funds expire. Launched in 2004, the Rx for Change website teaching content is updated at least annually and also when needed to address changes in clinical practice (eg, postlaunch of a new medication, inclusion or removal of a boxed warning). However, its usage has yet to be characterized. Such knowledge would be helpful to understand the impact of providing shared curricular materials through a public access website and to inform future curriculum developers about potential usage and benefits of hosting shared materials online. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to conduct a longitudinal analysis of user characteristics and utilization of the Rx for Change website over a period of 15 years.

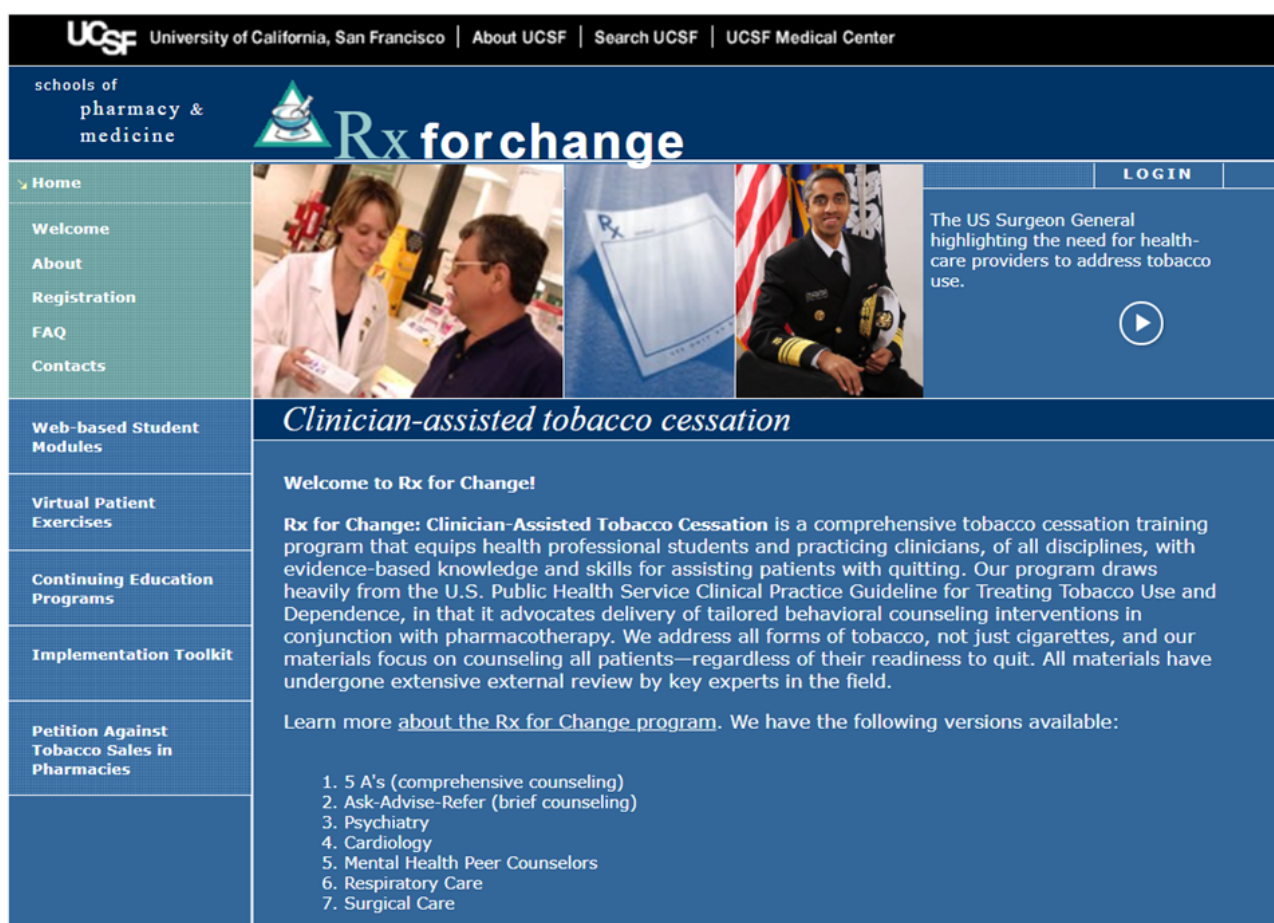**Figure 1.** Rx for Change website homepage [10].

Figure 2. Rx for Change website: sample page hosting tobacco "trigger tape" videos.

Methods

User and utilization data have been collected prospectively via the Rx for Change website since its launch in 2004. For the purpose of this study, data were extracted for a period of 15 years, ranging from the public launch date on April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2019. Individuals who registered on the website provided contact information, including their state and country, their primary discipline (medicine, nursing, pharmacy, respiratory care, dentistry, health educator/peer counselor, social work, other), and whether they were a student or resident. Additional information included how they heard about the Rx for Change program (conference/meeting/workshop; faculty member/colleague; internet LISTSERV; newsletter or publication; surfing the internet; University of California San Francisco Smoking Cessation Leadership Center; other) and their intended use of the materials (enhance own knowledge/skills; teach health professional students; teach licensed health professionals; not sure). In addition to user characteristics, prospectively collected data included various utilization measures: files downloaded (frequency and type), number of file downloads per user, number of logins, and trends in utilization over time. All video files on the website are permitted to be streamed directly on the website, and these occurrences were not linkable to individual users and therefore were not captured along with the number of file downloads.

With respect to data interpretation, it is important to note that not all programmatic materials were available at the launch of the website in 2004 — a version addressing brief counseling (Ask-Advise-Refer) was launched in November 2007, and new discipline-specific versions (eg, psychiatry, respiratory care, peer counselor, cardiology, and surgical care) became available over time. Along with the annual updates, new videos and role-playing case materials were added periodically, and all were modified as needed to be consistent with evolving clinical practice guidelines. In 2019, a suite of 6 standardized patient cases with scoring rubrics for OSCEs were added along with a link to a suite of tobacco-specific virtual patients [31]. No proactive efforts were made (eg, no email notifications) to alert users of the availability of new or updated content, and at no time during the 15-year period was the website inaccessible for more than a few hours at a time during updates or server maintenance.

Data cleaning occurred at the individual user level, which included combining duplicate registrants (eg, identical users who established separate accounts with different email addresses), reclassifying disciplines where appropriate, and recategorizing data response options labeled as "other" (eg, user checked "other" for the discipline field but provided information consistent with existing response options). Combining duplicate registrants was done by manually reviewing registrations that appeared to belong to the same person, and after extensive investigation through internet search engines and LinkedIn profiles, discussion, and consensus, the team determined when it was appropriate to attribute multiple registrants to the same user. Data were analyzed using SPSS, version 26 [32]. The study was approved by the University of California, San Francisco and Purdue University Institutional Review Boards for the protection of human subjects.

Results

User Characteristics

A total of 15,576 unique users registered on the Rx for Change website during the study period. Registrants represented all 50 states in the United States and 94 different countries. Among users with a designated health discipline (15,505/15,576, 99.5%), the top represented disciplines were pharmacy (6393/15,505, 41.2%), followed by nursing (3377/15,505, 21.8%) and health educators/peer counselors (1653/15,505, 10.7%; Table 1). Students and residents represented 49.7% (7747/15,576) of all registrants.

Table 1. Represented disciplines among 15,505[a] end users reporting discipline and student or resident status.

Disciplines	Nonstudent or nonresident (n=7758), n (%)	Student or resident (n=7747), n (%)	Total (n=15,505), n (%)
Pharmacy	1790 (23.1)	4603 (59.4)	6393 (41.2)
Nursing	1305 (16.8)	2072 (26.7)	3377 (21.8)
Health educator or peer counselor	1461 (18.8)	192 (2.5)	1653 (10.7)
Medicine[b]	677 (8.7)	239 (3.1)	916 (5.9)
Respiratory care	440 (5.7)	127 (1.6)	567 (3.7)
Dentistry	174 (2.2)	87 (1.1)	261 (1.7)
Social work	112 (1.4)	21 (0.3)	133 (0.9)
Other	1799 (23.2)	406 (5.3)	2205 (14.2)

[a]71 (0.5%) end users did not provide data describing their student/resident status and discipline.

[b]Includes physicians and physician assistants.

Of nonstudents/nonresidents, approximately one third (2591/7758, 33.4%) reported hearing about the website from a faculty member or colleague; the remainder heard about the website at a conference, meeting, or workshop (1305/7758, 16.8%); while surfing the internet (1295/7758, 16.7%); on an internet LISTSERV (734/7758, 9.5%), distributed by the University of California Smoking Cessation Leadership Center (531/7758, 6.8%), or in a newsletter publication or article (468/7758, 6.0%). The most commonly selected intended use of the Rx for Change materials was to enhance personal

knowledge and skills (5792/7308, 79.3%); 39.2% (2867/7308) intended to teach licensed health professionals, and 33.2% (2425/7308) indicated that they intended to teach health professional students (categories not mutually exclusive).

Website Utilization Characteristics

During the evaluation period, 259,835 files were downloaded by 12,387 users, representing 79.5% (12,387/15,576) of all website registrants. While the remainder of the registrants (3189/15,576; 20.5%) might have streamed videos on the website, they did not download any files. The file type most commonly downloaded was ancillary handouts (n=61,348), followed by counseling videos (n=58,109) and instructors' PowerPoint slides (n=49,501; Table 2). Across the 15-year time period, users logged into the website a total of 62,172 times. Login frequency and download frequency trends over time are shown in Figure 3.

Table 2. File downloads (n=259,835) by teaching tool.

Teaching tool	Description of tool	Number of downloads, n (%)
Ancillary handouts	Tools that clinicians can use when helping patients (eg, tobacco cessation counseling guide, withdrawal symptoms information sheet, drug interactions with tobacco smoke table, tobacco use log, coping strategies for patients, pharmacologic product guide)	61,348 (23.6)
Counseling videos	Video segments demonstrating counseling of a wide range of patients (not ready to quit, ready to quit, recent quitter, former tobacco user) in many patient care settings	58,109 (22.4)
PowerPoint teaching slides	PowerPoint slides with detailed instructor notes and relevant literature citations	49,501 (19.1)
Learner slide handouts	PDF versions of the PowerPoint slides	32,024 (12.3)
Role playing cases	Handouts for role playing with a wide range of patient case scenarios (not ready to quit, ready to quit, recent quitter, former tobacco user)	22,809 (8.8)
Trigger tape videos	Brief video segments (1-2 phrases from an actor who plays the role of a patient) that are used as a stimulus to elicit, or "trigger," discussion with learners	17,959 (6.9)
Instructor tools	Guides and other resources to facilitate implementation of the Rx for Change curriculum	8749 (3.4)
Introductory videos	A 3-minute video created by the U.S. Surgeon General highlighting the need for health care providers to address tobacco use and an 8-minute introductory video of interviews with smokers	3582 (1.4)
Reading materials	Recommended background readings (eg, PDF versions of textbook chapters and continuing education programs on tobacco cessation)	3451 (1.3)
Administrative tools	End-user license agreement, sample medication order forms, tracking forms, etc.	2213 (0.9)
OSCE[a] case materials	Standardized patient cases, with corresponding scoring rubrics for formative and evaluative exercises	90 (<0.01)

[a]OSCE: objective structured clinical examination; these competency assessment tools became available on the website in 2018.

Figure 3. Number of files downloaded and number of logins, per year (April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2019).
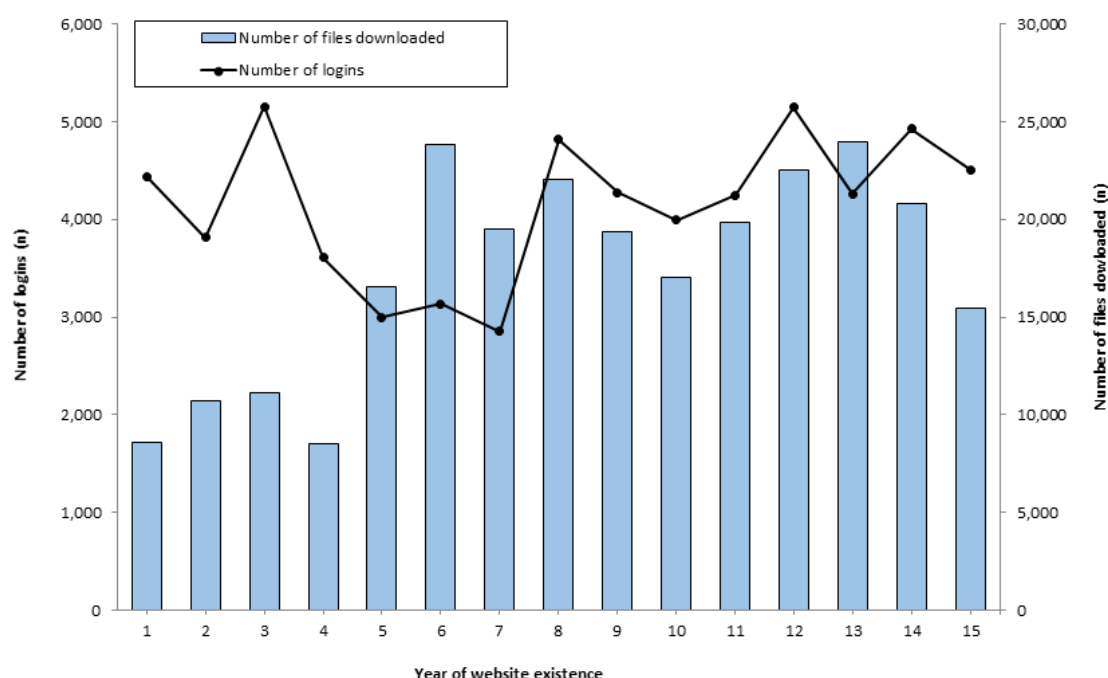
Discussion

Principal Findings

This study contributes important knowledge to the literature regarding the extent to which health professional educators, clinicians, and students utilize a website that was designed to house and disseminate educational materials for tobacco cessation. The study complements our concurrent research evaluating the Rx for Change program, thus providing a more complete picture of the program's reach and long-term impact [33]. Although an abundance of existing literature describes web-based interventions for tobacco cessation [34], to our knowledge, there are no studies that characterize internet-based access to tools designed to facilitate faculty and students in their teaching and learning roles and clinicians in their patient care roles. Current literature addressing professional educational websites other than tobacco cessation is also scarce. We identified 3 websites that house teaching materials (pharmacogenomics, infectious diseases, and diabetes mellitus) [35-37], but utilization of these sites have not been described in the literature. In addition to widespread use of the website over a period of 15 years, the Rx for Change materials have been used in a variety of tobacco cessation studies across several health disciplines [38-51]. Recently, the long-term impact of the train-the-trainer programs on faculty development and Rx for Change implementation in pharmacy schools was evaluated through application of the RE-AIM framework [52,53].

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory [29], which was used to develop and disseminate the Rx for Change curriculum, was also used to guide elements of data interpretation. This theory states that new programs are more likely to exhibit enhanced adoption if they possess 5 main characteristics: (1) relative advantage over existing programs; (2) compatibility with existing values, experiences, and needs of potential adopters; (3) how complex the program is to understand and use; (4) trialability, or the extent to which a potential user can test or experiment with a program before committing to adoption; and (5) observability (ie, the extent to which the program provides tangible outcomes). Most users learned about the Rx for Change website from another colleague, which suggests that colleagues perceived the website and its materials to possess a relative advantage over other available sources. This perception is consistent with findings from a prior study, in which the majority of faculty respondents (89.9%) rated the website as either very or extremely useful [53]. Compatibility was shown by the fact that website registrants' most commonly cited intention for use of the curricular materials was to enhance their own knowledge and skills. Trialability and perceived acceptability of the complexity of the Rx for Change program were evident by the large number of registrations and continued use over time. An observable result was the large number of logins and file downloads from the website.

Previous findings suggest that the availability of a website to host shared teaching materials is a useful resource for health professional educators, and users report appreciation for access to regularly updated teaching content [33]. In our study, the most frequent referral source was a faculty member or a colleague (33.4%). These findings are consistent with those identified in the evaluation of a web-based mental health portal, for which the highest utilization was among individuals personally invited to visit the website [54]. Thus, an effective mode of dissemination is learning about the program or its website from a professional or social network. Although no proactive efforts were made to alert users about updates or new content, this is a strategy that could be considered in the future as well as a brief survey of user needs to provide guidance for future program enhancements. Another area of future research

is assessing important aspects of the website such as the website's readability, quality of information, credibility, and design.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include a possibility of duplicate users who utilized different email addresses when registering on the website. This was addressed through a manual review, as described in the Methods. Additionally, the number of file downloads found in this study is an underestimate, because videos can be streamed and viewed directly on the website, without downloading. Also, the number of file downloads likely underestimates actual utilization in the classroom or in clinical practice. For example, an instructor or clinician might download the content once and use it on a regular basis until the next update of the program materials, and these implementation activities are not captured by the Rx for Change website. This study does not provide evidence that a shared curriculum website would contribute to changes in the prevalence of tobacco use, although it is well-documented that clinicians have a proven, positive impact on their patients' ability to quit and therefore

training is warranted [6]. Finally, because the ability to evaluate the long-term utilization of the shared curricular resources is fully dependent on the ability to maintain the quality and accessibility of the materials, the sustainability of any program is significantly challenged without ongoing funding and personal commitment of the program creators.

Conclusions

The Rx for Change website utilization data demonstrated sustained use, providing immediate access to shared, evidence-based tobacco cessation teaching and practice tools for educators and clinicians since 2004. The website had a broad interprofessional reach, which increases the likelihood of tobacco users receiving assistance from multiple types of health care providers. The consistent utilization over time and large number of downloads provided evidence for the feasibility and utility of a public access website hosting a shared tobacco cessation curriculum for health professionals. The shared curriculum concept, in tandem with a frequently updated website to host curricular materials, can be replicated for other topics of public health importance.

Conflicts of Interest

RLC and KSH created and maintain the Rx for Change program and the curriculum website.

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Abbreviations

ANDS: alternative nicotine delivery systems
OSCE: objective structured clinical examination

XSL•FO

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Using a Web-Based Quiz Game as a Tool to Summarize Essential Content in Medical School Classes: Retrospective Comparative Study

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Abstract

Background: Kahoot! is a web-based technology quiz game in which teachers can design their own quizzes via provided game templates. The advantages of these games are their attractive interfaces, which contain stimulating music, moving pictures, and colorful, animated shapes to maintain students' attentiveness while they perform the quizzes.

Objective: The aim of this study was to evaluate the use of Kahoot! compared with a traditional teaching approach as a tool to summarize the essential content of a medical school class in the aspects of final examination scores and the perception of students regarding aspects of their learning environment and of process management.

Methods: This study used an interrupted time series design, and retrospective data were collected from 85 medical students. Of these 85 students, 43 completed a Kahoot! quiz, while 42 students completed a paper quiz. All students attended a lecture on the topic of bone and joint infection and participated in a short case discussion. Students from both groups received the same content and study material, with the exception that at the end of the lesson, students in the Kahoot! group completed a quiz summarizing the essential content from the lecture, whereas the other group received a paper quiz with the same questions and the teacher provided an explanation after the students had finished. The students' satisfaction was evaluated after the class, and their final examination was held 2 weeks after the class.

Results: The mean final examination score in the Kahoot! group was 62.84 (SD 8.79), compared to 60.81 (SD 9.25) in the control group (P=.30). The students' satisfaction with the class environment, learning process management, and teacher were not significantly different between the 2 groups (all P>.05).

Conclusions: In this study, it was found that using Kahoot! as a tool to summarize the essential content in medical school classes involving a lecture and case discussion did not affect the students' final examination scores or their satisfaction with the class environment, learning process management, or teacher.

Introduction

Game-based learning is a teaching method that integrates games into the learning process. Game-based learning uses "game mechanics," in which tools or applications are used to produce motivation, interactivity, and rewards [1]. Kahoot is a web-based technology quiz game that enables teachers to design their own quizzes in provided game templates. The advantages of this game are its attractive interface, which contains stimulating music, moving pictures and colorful, animated shapes, which can maintain students' attentiveness while they complete the quiz [2,3].

One study reported that the majority of students using Kahoot! reported sentiments such as "I have fun and I learn," and that it reinforced what they had learned in class [4]. However, in health care education, there are limited studies that evaluate using Kahoot! in the classroom as a tool to summarize essential content, as compared with traditional teaching approaches in which students complete the quiz on paper and the teacher summarizes the essential content after the quiz. Therefore, the aim of this study was to evaluate the results of using Kahoot! in the aspects of final examination scores and the perceptions of students regarding the learning environment and process management compared with traditional teaching approaches.

Methods

The design of this study involved an interrupted time series and retrospective data collection. Data from fifth-year medical students who attended a bone and joint infection class in the Orthopedic Department of the Faculty of Medicine, Prince of Songkla University, between April 2017 and March 2019 were retrieved from the undergraduate medical education unit database. We compared students who used Kahoot! in the classroom as a tool to summarize the essential content of the class between April 2018 and March 2019 with students who attended class between April 2017 and March 2018 and who completed a paper quiz with the teacher summarizing the essential content after the quiz as the control group. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee and Institutional Review Board of the Faculty of Medicine, Prince of Songkla University. Consent was waived by the ethics committee. The faculty gave permission for the extraction of this information from the database.

All students attended a lecture on the topic of bone and joint infection and a short case discussion, with each class containing 10-12 students. All students in the Kahoot! group and control group received the same content and study material, with the exception of the end of the lesson, wherein students in the Kahoot! group completed a quiz in Kahoot! to summarize the essential content of the lecture while the other group completed a paper quiz; both quizzes contained the same questions. The quiz for both groups was presented on the screen in front of the classroom. In the Kahoot! group, all students completed the quiz via their mobile phone. Each quiz consisted of a process and time limit; after answering each question, the students progressed to the next question. The rules of the game were that the student who provided the most correct answers was the

winner; during the quiz, after answering each question, the total score and the score leader's name were shown. The quiz consisted of 10 questions; each question had four answer choices with a single correct answer, and the teacher provided a short explanation after each question in the Kahoot! group. In the control group, the quiz was completed by the students on paper, and the teacher gave an explanation after students had finished the entire quiz.

The students' satisfaction with the class environment, learning process management, and teacher was evaluated by a numeric rating scale in which 0 represented "least satisfied" and 4 indicated "most satisfied." This assessment was conducted through a web-based evaluation program. The evaluation process was performed after the class, and the results for each student were blinded to the identity of the student to prevent information bias from the student, while the teacher gave feedback. All the students wrote a final examination 2 weeks following the class, with the same examination questions in both groups.

The analyses were conducted using R version 3.1.0 software (R Foundation for Statistical Computing). Student grade point average (GPA), satisfaction in each domain, and examination score were evaluated with the Student t-test. The Pearson chi-square test was used for a comparison of gender between the groups. The sample size estimation was performed based on previous student examination scores (mean 63.7, SD 8). For each group, 25 students were required to detect a 10% difference in the examination scores with a significance level set to $P=.05$ and a power set to 0.8.

Results

A total of 85 students were included in this study. Of these 85 students, 43 played Kahoot! and 42 students used a traditional method. There were no significant differences in gender between the 2 groups (Kahoot! group: 26 female and 17 male students; control group: 29 female and 13 male students, $P=.41$). The GPAs of the students were also not significantly different between the 2 groups (Kahoot! group: 3.32, SD 0.3; control group: 3.21, SD 0.26; $P=.07$).

The mean examination score in the Kahoot! group was 62.84 (SD 8.79), compared to 60.81 (SD 9.25) in the control group ($P=.30$). The students' satisfaction with the class environment, learning process management, and teacher were not significantly different between the 2 groups (Table 1).

Table 1. Mean student satisfaction scores for the 2 groups (N=85). Scores ranged from 0-4, with 0 indicating low satisfaction and 4 indicating high satisfaction.

Variable	Kahoot! group (n=43), mean (SD)	Control group (n=42), mean (SD)	*P* value
Promoting a good learning environment			
Interaction between teachers and students	3.9 (0.38)	3.88 (0.33)	.81
Learning process management			
Learning process management that emphasizes student participation	3.9 (0.3)	3.83 (0.38)	.38
Using media and learning resources	3.75 (0.44)	3.86 (0.35)	.23
Organizing the learning process so that the learned material can be applied	3.93 (0.27)	3.88 (0.33)	.51
Evaluation			
Evaluation during teaching	3.88 (0.33)	3.93 (0.26)	.42
Teacher			
Teaching and personality	3.93 (0.27)	3.88 (0.33)	.68
Encouraging learners to demonstrate proper behavior, including respecting students	3.98 (0.16)	3.88 (0.33)	.11

Discussion

Principal Findings

In our study, we found that the final examination scores for students who used Kahoot! in the classroom as a tool to summarize essential content were slightly higher compared with those of students who learned the same material through traditional teaching approaches and completed the quiz on paper; however, this difference did not reach statistical significance. It should be noted that our results are in contradiction with those in previous reports. In a study of business course students by Bawa [5], it was found that students in classes using Kahoot! had significantly better scores on their final examinations than students in a control group. Nevertheless, there is one study that supports our results. A study of the use of Kahoot! in an introductory-level animal science course by Harrison [6] showed that students in the Kahoot! group did not have significantly higher examination scores compared with students in the control group.

In this study, we found that student satisfaction with the class environment, learning process management, and teacher were not significantly different between the Kahoot! group and control group. This result was the same as that in a previous study of high school students learning Chinese as a foreign language [7]. The results of that study showed that use of Kahoot! by students had no significant effect on student motivation. In other research on the use of Kahoot! compared

with traditional methods in an Earth Science class [8], it was also found that there were no significant differences in the students' overall learning motivation or in any of the motivation variables, such as motivation, value, expectation, and emotional experience, between the 2 groups.

Limitations

This study had a number of limitations. First, this study had a limited number of participants; therefore, this study was likely underpowered due to the lower than expected differences in outcomes. Second, the satisfaction evaluated in this study was overall satisfaction with a class that consisted of a lecture, case discussion, and either a Kahoot! quiz or paper quiz. In our study, Kahoot! was only used at the end of the class. We hypothesized that students would prefer Kahoot! to a paper quiz; however, the impact of Kahoot! may not have been large enough to change the overall satisfaction score of the class.

Conclusion

This study found that using Kahoot! as a tool to summarize the essential content in medical school classes that involved both a lecture and case discussion did not affect students' final examination scores. Additionally, it did not affect student satisfaction with the class environment, learning process management, or teacher.

Data Availability

The data sets generated during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Authors' Contributions

VY contributed to the study design, data collection, statistical analysis, and writing of the paper; JB contributed to the study design, data collection, and writing of the paper.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

GPA: grade point average

Viewpoint

Survey of Residency Directors' Views on Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Medical students enter the medicine field with fresh ideas that may make them great entrepreneurs. However, medical students are uncertain about how the program directors of their desired residency would view them if they pursued business opportunities. We surveyed residency directors to obtain their views on medical students' entrepreneurship experiences. This viewpoint article aims to help American medical students who are interested in health innovations understand how their interests and entrepreneurial experiences may affect how they are viewed by residency program directors. Most program directors had favorable views of medical students with experience in entrepreneurship, and they believed that the innovative traits gained from such experiences would add to the program.

KEYWORDS

medical student education; medical student innovation; health innovation; program director

Introduction

Due to living in an era when innovative companies like Uber and Amazon are radically transforming the way we live our lives (from our transportation methods to our shopping methods), we are constantly exposed to new ideas that make life easier and more efficient. Despite people's excitement for innovation, health care has been lagging in terms of adopting new ways to improve the health of Americans in a cost-effective manner [1]. In 2016, health care expenditures exceeded US $3 trillion in the United States, which is equivalent to US $9500 per person [2]. However, this amount of spending has not resulted in spectacular health outcomes, as the United States continues to have higher chronic disease rates; lower life expectancies; and poorer determinants of health, such as obesity, compared to other high-income nations [3,4]. One group in the medical profession that is beyond capable of being innovators in medicine is medical students.

Medical students enter the clinical medicine field with fresh and inquisitive minds [5]. Without years of experience and preconceptions, medical students can identify inefficiencies and

challenges in the medicine field and have a strong desire to do something about them [5]. They often question the status quo of the health care system and ponder how it can be changed for the better. These characteristics have led to examples of successful companies started by medical students, such as Osmosis and SimX [6,7].

Although many medical students may have an interest in innovation and entrepreneurship, not many will actively pursue opportunities in these areas [8,9]. There is tremendous pressure for medical students to stay on the traditional pathway toward residency—obtaining glowing US Medical Licensing Examination scores, stunning clinical rotation evaluations, and prolific research achievements. Although health innovation is essential for improving the health care system, experts are unsure of how it can be integrated into medical training and, more importantly, how it affects students' chances of being matched to their top choice residency programs [8,10]. To uncover how residency program directors perceive medical student entrepreneurship experiences in the application process, we conducted a survey of residency directors from some of the highest-ranked residency programs in the country.

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Methods

We sent a web-based survey via email to the directors of residencies across 16 different specialties that were affiliated with 17 top-ranked medical schools (according to the US News and World Report) [11] that represented the major regions of the country. The primary care–related fields that were represented included family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, emergency medicine, and psychiatry. The nonprimary care–related fields that were represented included anesthesiology, radiology, neurology, general surgery, ophthalmology, orthopedic surgery, and plastic surgery. The initial email was followed by a reminder email that was sent approximately 1-2 weeks later.

The survey included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The multiple-choice questions included the following: (1) how many students with start-up experience did you encounter in the last 5 application cycles; (2) how does your program perceive students with start-up experience in the evaluation process; (3) what skills learned from start-ups do you believe can be applicable to a student training as a resident; (4) do you think using this time to work in start-ups or businesses would be beneficial for the student's clinical training; and (5) how would you rate your department/institution in terms of its receptiveness to new ideas? The multiple-choice responses were recorded on Google Forms and response percentages were calculated.

Open-ended questions included the following: (1) what advice do you have for medical students who are interested in entrepreneurship and start-ups; and (2) does your residency program permit students to take time off to pursue their research or academic interests? The responses to these questions were qualitatively analyzed by using a conventional content analysis approach, and notable comments are reported in the *Results* section [12].

Results

We sent 190 survey requests; a total of 28 residency directors responded (response rate=15%). Of the 28 directors, 17 (61%) believed that providing start-up experiences in the residency application was favorable and increased the likelihood of being matched to a residency program. Further, 9 (32%) directors had neutral views on entrepreneurship experience, while 2 (7%) directors viewed the experience as unfavorable. All residency directors reported that they encountered medical students with entrepreneurship experience in the last 5 application cycles, with 10 (36%) reporting that they encountered 1-5 such applicants and 6 (21%) reporting that they encountered more than 15 such applicants.

When asked about what skills students can learn from start-ups that are applicable to residency training, 22 (79%) residency directors believed that students could gain communication skills, leadership skills, and the ability to innovate. Further, 20 (71%) surveyed directors believed that students could gain organizational skills, 18 (64%) believed that students could gain

the ability to work in a team, and 16 (57%) said that students could gain better time management skills.

When residency directors were asked to rate their department or institution in terms of its receptiveness to new ideas, 13 (43%) directors reported that their institution was a very innovative place where new ideas were implemented rapidly, and 12 (46%) believed that their institutions were somewhat innovative and that new ideas could take some time to be implemented.

Although 24 (86%) residency directors reported that they permitted residents to take time off to pursue research or academic interests (duration was variable but could range from 6 weeks to 2 years), only 7 (25%) directors thought that taking time off to work in start-ups or businesses would benefit residents' clinical training, 16 (57%) believed that such time off might help students, and 5 (18%) believed that such time off would not help residents.

Perhaps the more interesting insights came from the comments provided by the residency directors. Most comments revolved around the theme that students should focus on becoming great clinicians before pursuing entrepreneurial interests. A Johns Hopkins program director who viewed start-up experiences as favorable made the following comment:

> *Innovation in medicine is of the utmost importance...recently we have all expanded our view on how to fund and support new ideas. Start-ups are an excellent way to support innovation and we are all favorably inclined toward students with experience in this realm. The success or failure of the start-up is immaterial. The process itself is highly educational.*

Another program director said:

> *I would encourage them, but to also reflect on what their ultimate professional goals are with a medical degree. Ideally, their experience would align with these goals. We look for this alignment in the application process.*

A director also cautioned that "[it] is important to be up front with program directors regarding your interests." They also stated:

> *Since you'll be matching into a job (as well as a training program) the program is expecting that your attention will be primarily on the training program so unforeseen changes in staffing can be disruptive. Talking in advance can help keep options open.*

We also learned from directors who negatively viewed entrepreneurship. A director stated:

> *Wait until you are faculty. Our Program and others consider those students interested in entrepreneurship and start-ups to be unfocused, self-absorbed, and potential flight risks. While we interview students with such interests they definitely lose points when it comes time for ranking.*

Another director said:

> *The only residents we've had quit our training program recently have been entrepreneurs. Despite*

the positive qualities inherent in an entrepreneur this has made us hesitant to match any more.

Discussion

Despite our small sample size, our survey roughly gauged the opinions of directors of highly ranked residencies across multiple specialties in the United States. There was a diversity of opinions, but the majority of directors (17/28, 61%) perceived providing start-up experiences in the residency application as positive. Although they encouraged students to pursue entrepreneurial interests, residency directors almost unanimously believed that developing good clinical skills and becoming a good physician were the top priorities. There have been medical students who left their institution for a start-up before returning to school due to their desire to see patients again [13]. Since residency training is very demanding, many highly recommended students pursue other experiences before or after their residency rather than during their residency.

Conclusion

We found that several residency directors were concerned that residents would quit their residency program to pursue other opportunities and therefore had more cautious attitudes. With regard to one's career plans, clear and timely communication with residency program directors during the application cycle is crucial.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Viewpoint

Teaching Telemedicine: The Next Frontier for Medical Educators

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed telemedicine to the forefront of health care delivery, and for many clinicians, virtual visits are the new normal. Although telemedicine has allowed clinicians to safely care for patients from a distance during the current pandemic, its rapid adoption has outpaced clinician training and development of best practices. Additionally, telemedicine has pulled trainees into a new virtual education environment that finds them oftentimes physically separated from their preceptors. Medical educators are challenged with figuring out how to integrate learners into virtual workflows while teaching and providing patient-centered virtual care. In this viewpoint, we review principles of patient-centered care in the in-person setting, explore the concept of patient-centered virtual care, and advocate for the development and implementation of patient-centered telemedicine competencies. We also recommend strategies for teaching patient-centered virtual care, integrating trainees into virtual workflows, and developing telemedicine curricula for graduate medical education trainees by using our TELEMEDS framework as a model.

Introduction

Virtual visits are "clinical interactions in health care that do not involve the patient and provider being in the same room at the same time" [1], such as visits conducted via telephone or videoconferencing [2]. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual visits allowed clinicians to provide care to their ambulatory patients in a safe manner; however, for most clinicians, the speed at which they were forced to transition their practices to telemedicine did not allow time for thoughtful planning about the integration of patient-centered care practices and trainee education. Virtual visits continue to constitute a significant portion of outpatient care, and although guidance exists on how to make virtual visits more effective and patient-centered [2-6], we suspect many clinicians across various specialties are finding it difficult to master patient-centered

virtual visit practices, all while trying to educate their students, residents, and fellows on the same topic. Furthermore, trainees and faculty may not be in the same physical space for virtual clinic sessions, which creates further challenges for integrating trainees into new workflows.

Since telemedicine will likely be part of our clinical landscape in the future, clinician educators will need educational strategies to teach patient-centered virtual visit practices to trainees. Additionally, since patient-centeredness is intricately tied to care access and health equity [7], clinician educators and trainees alike must learn how to approach telemedicine from an individualized, patient-centered standpoint, understanding how it can both enhance care for some vulnerable communities [8,9] as well as ways it can widen health care disparities for others [10-13]. With this in mind, we will discuss what is known about patient-centered care, particularly as it applies to virtual visits.

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We will propose strategies for teaching patient-centered virtual practices to trainees with the guidance of the framework "TELEMEDS," which is based on a literature review and input from key stakeholders, including trainees and practicing clinicians (Figure 1). Although some of the tips we share in this paper are specific to video visits and the added benefit of connecting visually across a screen, many of our strategies (eg, reviewing a virtual clinic schedule and verbal communication tips) also apply to telephone visits, so we will use the term "virtual visit" to apply broadly to both scenarios. Finally, we will discuss how best to integrate trainees into virtual clinic workflows.

Figure 1. The TELEMEDS mnemonic, based on a literature review and input from key stakeholders, presents a framework for teaching patient-centered virtual practices to trainees.

Our recommendations provide practical tips for incorporating patient-centered telemedicine into clinical training; however, more work is needed to refine and implement these strategies. Thus, we recognize the need to develop telemedicine curricula

for senior clinicians and trainees alike. We call on the medical education community to prioritize the development, equitable implementation, and study of evidence-based telemedicine training and the meaningful evaluation of trainees with regard to these skills.

What We Know About Patient-Centered Care and Telemedicine

Patient-centered care is defined as "providing care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs and values and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions" [14]. Prior studies have shown patient-centered care in the in-person setting is associated with higher patient satisfaction and positive health outcomes [15,16]. As the patient-centered medical home [17] extends into a virtual space, the same guiding principles of patient-centered care are still possible, if not more so. In fact, simply providing virtual visit options may allow patients to access care more easily, improve communication with their care team, and give patients more control over where and how they choose to interact with the health care system—all important and fundamental tenets of providing the right care, at the right time, in the right place [18].

Additional studies have demonstrated several benefits of virtual visits, including ease of use, low cost, ability to improve patient-provider communication, decreased travel time, increased access to care for patients, and high patient satisfaction [19-21]. Despite these benefits, telemedicine may risk further fragmentation of care if not implemented correctly [22]. In particular, it raises issues related to equitable care delivery and concerns of exacerbating the digital divide, where access to the technology required for telehealth differs along sociodemographic lines [10-12]. Further, the virtual nature of telemedicine has the potential to hinder patient-provider communication; for example, in one study where patients expressed concerns about errors in their care due to the lack of physical exam, they reported feeling less involved during the visit and had difficulty finding opportunities to speak [23]. Other studies have summarized further communication drawbacks, including lack of physical touch, difficulty building rapport, and decreased ability to recognize subtle nonverbal cues and expressions [2,24].

Although we are still discovering barriers and solutions to patient-provider communication through the lens of this new technology, we can look to recent history for cues on how to overcome challenges in an increasingly tech-centric world. For instance, as electronic health records (EHRs) became the norm across institutions, studies found that providers spent more than half of their time in a patient encounter navigating the EHR system, which resulted in a struggle for providers to give adequate time to direct patient care [25]. Another study on patient perceptions of EHR use found that patients expressed concern that their physicians were more focused on the computer than on them during in-person clinic visits [26]. However, over the course of time, providers found ways to utilize the EHR to improve patient-doctor communication, to engage patients

visually, and to actively promote discussion, education, and shared decision-making [25,27].

Some more recent work has helped elucidate how the core principles of patient-centered care can be applied to telemedicine. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, some institutions developed checklists or principles to guide clinicians on how to carry in-person patient-centered communication into the virtual world [5,6]. Others have recommended helping patients understand their role in telemedicine communication, emphasizing the importance of preparing for and engaging in virtual visits [2]. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has also released a report on telehealth competencies for trainees and providers across the continuum [28]. Although all these guidelines provide a base for improving patient-provider communication in the virtual setting, more evidence is needed to ascertain how these guidelines impact patients' perceptions of their care as well as their health outcomes. Additional guidance for medical educators is also needed on how to teach these emerging "best-practices" and competencies to trainees, how to meaningfully integrate trainees into virtual clinic workflows, and how to provide feedback on patient-centered virtual communication.

Teaching Patient-Centered Telemedicine

Preparing for a virtual visit clinic day with trainees necessitates deliberate planning on the part of both the supervising clinician and the trainee. For virtual sessions, trainees are still expected to review their schedule, chart review, and ensure adequate follow-up for patients, all while considering the limitations of the virtual setting. Supervising clinicians should teach trainees how each of these tasks looks different in the virtual setting and coach them on how to troubleshoot technological and communication issues before they arise (Figure 1) [3,4,6]. Additionally, preceptors should pursue opportunities to teach learners how to assess which patients are *appropriate* for video or phone visits and which situations may be more suited for an in-person visit [6,24]. Supervising attendings should focus on virtual visit communication skills, efficient utilization of the visit platform, setting expectations for the visit with patients, the importance of body language and speech [3,4,6], and strategies to engage patients by using video tools such as "screen share" (Figure 1).

It is also critical to train learners on how to leverage telemedicine to do things we cannot do in the in-person clinic setting. For example, the ability to have a family member join in from a separate location for a virtual visit with their elderly parent may add critical information that would not have been obtainable otherwise [29]. Similarly, information can be gleaned by using video as an opportunity to assess relevant parts of a patient's home environment in a way that is akin to the traditional and time-honored home-visit. In this way, video visits can be used to identify potential fall risks in a patient's home, accurately review how patients organize and take their medications [29], or to identify safety hazards present in the homes of pediatric patients. Virtual visits can also be used to augment in-person care to allow for touchpoints between clinic visits; for example, to assess medication tolerance or symptom

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relief or for follow-up educational sessions that may not require a full physical exam or assessment.

Finally, it is important to foster trainee awareness of patient-related telemedicine *challenges* and to present those from the perspective of health equity and access to care. As medical educators, we must not only look for ways to educate our learners on the factors that contribute to the creation of a digital divide, but we must also proactively cultivate opportunities for trainees to become involved in advocacy and quality improvement efforts to address these barriers head-on.

Embedding Trainees into Virtual Clinic Workflows

Integrating trainees into telehealth experiences not only provides opportunities for experiential learning and professional identity development but also contributes to improved patient health and extended capabilities of health care teams [30]. Therefore, thinking critically about the design of a virtual clinic workflow is crucial to ensuring successful clinical encounters and a supportive learning environment.

Unlike in-person clinic days where communication can be done face-to-face, virtual clinic days require clear expectations for how and when trainees should connect with patients, as well as a direct line of communication with their faculty preceptors so that they are quickly and easily accessible when needed. When multiple trainees (eg, medical student, resident, and fellow) are involved in a visit, each should have a specific role and understand how to quickly communicate with their supervisor if a need arises. Coordinating such a *dance* takes effort and skill, but with practice, it can become a meaningful care experience not just for trainees but for patients as well.

Although some clinicians may choose to communicate with trainees using nonvisual methods (eg, phone calls and text messaging) for simple questions throughout a virtual visit session, conducting an in-person or videoconference pre- and post-visit huddle can provide the added benefit of connecting in a more personal way and allows educators to read their trainees' verbal and non-verbal cues. Additionally, post-visit sessions provide opportunities for trainees to receive feedback on their patient-centered virtual visit skills as well as for the supervising clinician to receive feedback on their workflow, communication, and patient teaching in addition to a review of their documentation using the screen share function.

In the process of workflow development, it is important to note that no workflow is perfect or universal; workflows may change as we begin to better understand how various setups impact patient-centered care. For example, if multiple trainees are involved in the same call with one patient, this may enhance education, but it may be overwhelming for the patient. This example underscores the importance of setting expectations with patients at the start of a visit and obtaining feedback at its conclusion, which will allow individual clinicians to make important and necessary changes to their workflows over time. A virtual clinic workflow may also differ across providers and institutions, depending on the needs of each organization and the infrastructure of the virtual visit platform used. Knowledge of the benefits and limitations of the technology one has access to is inherent to developing workflows for individual educators. At the institutional level, organizations should strive to integrate Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-compliant platforms that support *various* workflows and consider trainee education along with platform selection. Furthermore, organizational buy-in is needed to integrate *time* for trainee education, debrief, and feedback sessions within a virtual clinic schedule and for observation and assessment during the continuum of their training.

Establishing Telemedicine Curricula for Graduate Medical Education

Given the limited use of telemedicine prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unlikely that many current trainees have received formal telemedicine training prior to or during residency. Moving forward, medical school, residency, and fellowship programs should develop purposeful telemedicine curricula for the trainees by considering the proposed AAMC telemedicine competencies and by using the aforementioned strategies and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle [31], a four-stage learning theory to promote effective learning (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle [27]. Four stages to promote effective learning of patient-centered virtual visit practices.
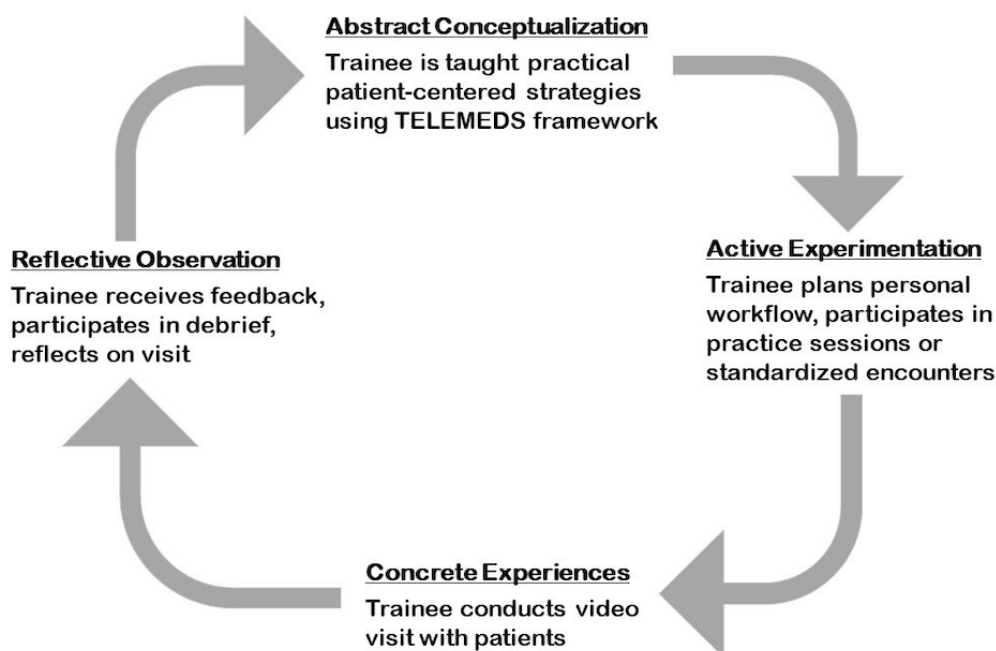
Applying Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle to teaching patient-centered virtual communication, the trainee should first be introduced to the TELEMEDS framework to better understand practical, patient-centered virtual communication skills (ie, abstract conceptualization). Medical educators should then provide arenas (eg, standardized encounters or virtual visit practice sessions) that reinforce the TELEMEDS concepts (ie, active experimentation) to be used when trainees conduct virtual visits with patients (ie, concrete experiences). Ideally, supervising attendings should provide real-time feedback for trainees on directly observed behaviors in order to encourage continued reflection and skill development (ie, reflective observation).

Other effective strategies for teaching patient-centered telemedicine may rely on competency-based medical education (CBME), focusing on measuring goal-oriented outcomes for learners, such as mastering the technology, performing a comprehensive video-based physical exam, and understanding professionalism in telemedicine [32]. Finally, educators should seek opportunities to serve as role models for trainees, as well as foster and nurture trainee involvement in advocacy and quality improvement efforts to improve health care access and telehealth equity for patients.

Thus, medical educators should strive to develop formal tools to guide this feedback, standardize assessment among learners, and assess how proficiency in these competencies affects patient outcomes.

Conclusions

Virtual visits will likely be a part of our clinical world moving forward. As medical educators adjust to this new form of care delivery, it is important to take a proactive approach to educate trainees on patient-centered telemedicine practices and integrate trainees into new, thoughtful, and deliberate workflows. It is important to note that future curricula for trainees will likely parallel that for preceptors, as many faculty members may not have received prior training, and some may not yet have attained proficiency in the skills of patient-centered virtual communication or teaching telemedicine best-practices. As such, faculty development will play a large role in this process. The TELEMEDS framework can be used by senior clinicians to provide structure and meaningful feedback to trainees to improve their virtual visit skills. Although further study on virtual visit communication skills is needed, our strategies provide important initial guidance for medical educators on how to promote meaningful, patient-centered virtual care.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

AAMC: Association of American Medical Colleges
CBME: competency-based medical education
EHR: electronic health record
HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

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Viewpoint

The United States Medical Licensing Exam Step 2 Clinical Skills Examination: Potential Alternatives During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

We feel that the current COVID-19 crisis has created great uncertainty and anxiety among medical students. With medical school classes initially being conducted on the web and the approaching season of "the Match" (a uniform system by which residency candidates and residency programs in the United States simultaneously "match" with the aid of a computer algorithm to fill first-year and second-year postgraduate training positions accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education), the situation did not seem to be improving. The National Resident Matching Program made an official announcement on May 26, 2020, that candidates would not be required to take or pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) examination to participate in the Match. On January 26, 2021, formal discontinuation of Step 2 CS was announced; for this reason, we have provided our perspective of possible alternative solutions to the Step 2 CS examination. A successful alternative model can be implemented in future residency match seasons as well.

KEYWORDS

COVID-19, a novel disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, was first recognized in Wuhan, China, in late 2019; it continued to spread globally, leading to a pandemic [1]. Efforts are being implemented to control this pandemic, prevent health care services from being overwhelmed, and minimize the effects of the pandemic on the economy while work progresses on vaccine development and antiviral therapy. The surging demands on medical systems have forced hospitals to make modifications such as deploying specialists in intensive care units and emergency departments and inviting medical students to graduate early and start working as interns.

The National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) residency match ("the Match") was also affected. Recommendations regarding limited travel and continued social distancing for the health and safety of applicants and program staff were taken into consideration. Adding to the uncertainty, on May 26, 2020, NRMP announced suspension of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) examination for a period of 12-18 months. It was stated that "The NRMP does not specifically require applicants to take or pass the CS examination in order to participate in the Match. The NRMP requires that US applicants meet the requirements

for graduation set by their medical school and the eligibility criteria set by their matched residency training program. International medical graduate (IMG) applicants must meet the exam requirements set by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) to achieve ECFMG certification [2]." ECFMG later announced that they would accept the Occupational English Test for health care. Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking are the components that are tested in this examination [3]. Remote proctoring was established to provide wide availability for applicants. On January 26, 2021, formal discontinuation of Step 2 CS was announced [4]. The eligibility criteria for taking the Step 3 examination were modified, and completion of Step 2 CS was no longer required to take the Step 3 examination. ECFMG introduced pathways for IMGs to obtain ECFMG certification.

The first round of clinical skills testing for all medical students under the name of Step 2 CS was conducted by USMLE in 2004 at a national level. Before 2004, an analogous exam, the Clinical Skills Assessment, was used to assess the clinical skills of foreign medical graduates [5]. The Step 2 CS exam was conducted by the Clinical Skills Evaluation Collaboration at six test centers (Atlanta, Chicago, Illinois, Houston, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia) within the United States. The state medical licensing boards delineated that the aim of this examination was "to ensure the ability to communicate effectively with patients and colleagues along with standards of safe practice of medicine." The examination had three components: Communication and Interpersonal Skills (CIS), Spoken English Proficiency (SEP), and Integrated Clinical Encounter (ICE). During this examination, examinees encountered 12 standardized patients and were given 15 minutes to take a complete history and perform a clinical examination for each patient; they were then given 10 additional minutes to write a patient note describing the findings and to generate an initial differential diagnosis list and a list of initial tests. The objectives of this examination were to assess communication skills, collect and provide information, assist patients with decision-making, provide emotional support to patients, gather data, and assess English language proficiency [6].

In a study published by Rosenthal et al in 2019 [7], an analysis was performed of 1041 graduates of a medical school from 2014-2017. The authors observed that candidates who failed the Step 2 CS examination had risk factors such as low National Board of Medical Examiners scores, low Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) scores, and poor faculty ratings. Thus, one can presume a direct correlation between the Step 2 CS examination performance of global applicants and their performance on other standardized examinations. Mehta et al [8] expressed their views in an article published in 2005, titled "A Critique of the USMLE Clinical Skills Examination," in which the authors expressed frustration regarding unhelpful feedback from their Step 2 CS score reports as compared to other USMLE examinations.

As with everything else that has been changing in medical education in the last few months, it is worth visiting the question of whether the Step 2 CS examination needs to change. The expense and travel involved do not currently seem to be very

practical, which leads to the idea of administering a gateway virtual assessment instead. Consideration should be given to the cost of the examination (US $1600), time and money spent on traveling, date availability in limited centers, and visa issues being faced by IMGs, while simultaneously considering the need for an alternate standardized performance assessment of US and international candidates. The aforementioned challenges are not concealed; in fact, the often-used guide, *First Aid for the USMLE Step 2 CS* [9], offers pages of lists of transportation, restaurants, and hotels with varying price points in these major cities to attempt to alleviate stressors for candidates.

The nonuniformity of OSCE and examination patterns in international medical schools raises the question of possible solutions to prevent non-US physicians from demonstrating subpar performance. The USMLE Step 2 CS website reports a pass rate of 94% (ICE 96%, CIS 98%, SEP >99%) for candidates from US and Canadian medical schools on the first attempt and 73% (ICE 81%, CIS 94%, SEP 93%) for candidates from non-US/Canadian schools [10]. These statistics are reflective of the continuing need to practice prerequisite assessments before granting an interview at the minimum for IMGs.

In 2016, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) launched an initial pilot program of standardized video interviews (SVIs) for all emergency medicine residency applicants; however, AAMC decided that there would be no SVIs beginning in the 2020-21 residency application cycle. The purpose of these interviews was to assess an applicant's "Knowledge of Professional Behaviors and Interpersonal and Communications Skills." Although it was stated that the AAMC reckoned the SVI to be a reliable and valid assessment, the decision to not expand the SVI to other residencies and to discontinue its use in emergency medicine was due to lack of and sometimes hesitant use of SVI in the selection process [11]. We believe that the most important part of the examination is demonstrating the ability to communicate with a patient. A study published in 2014 showed that communication issues were often the top reason for complaints against physicians in North Carolina [12]. Another study showed a modest correlation between Step 2 CS Communication and Interpersonal Skills ratings and the communication skills of interns [13].

Given the need of the hour, it may be the right time to revisit the idea of the SVI. A new version of the SVI can be conducted with two components: clinical and communication examinations (Figure 1). The communication part can be conducted at any place and time. Candidates will need to record their responses to the questions sent to them via a single-use web link with a time limit provided by USMLE and will be required to send the responses back for evaluation. The purpose of this examination will be to assess interpersonal communication and decision-making skills. For the assessment of clinical skills and history taking, Prometric staff can be trained in different countries to simulate patients, and the recorded encounters can then be sent to the examiners to assess and score. This step will not only help with the cost of the examination but will also decrease the stress of travelling and scheduling for all candidates, including national and international candidates.

Figure 1. Pictorial illustration of the standardized video interview model. USMLE: United States Medical Licensing Examination.
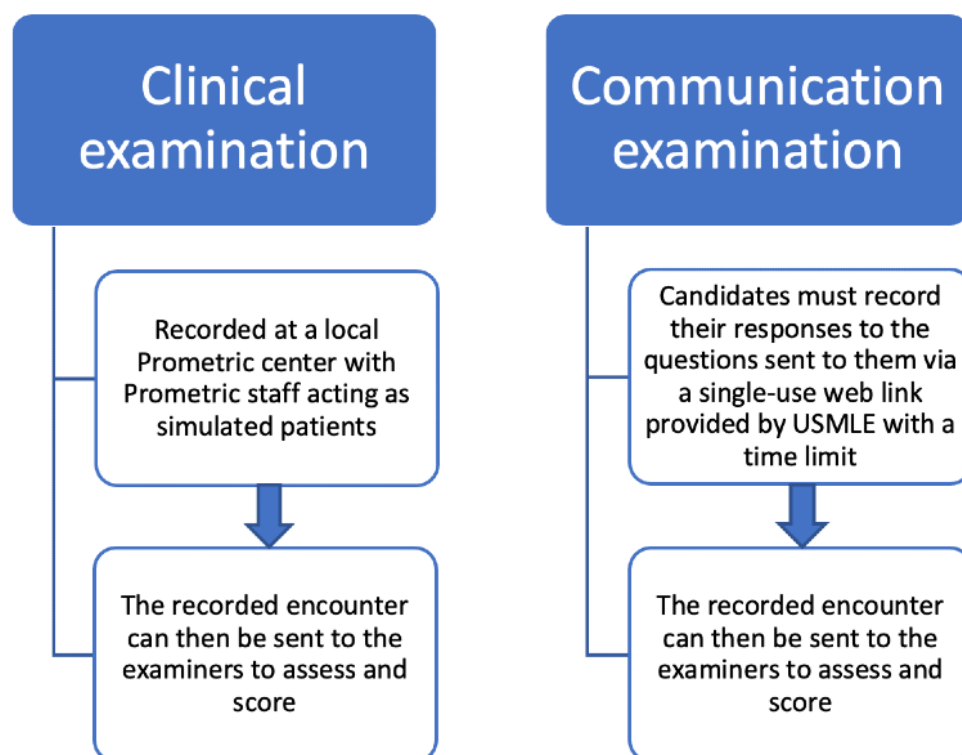
Other alternate solutions could be to provide training in these clinical and soft skills during the first 6 months of intern year or relying on the candidate's performance on medical school and other USMLE exams. This approach may result in more focus on OSCE examinations during medical school training. A study published in 2015 [14] showed that US medical students did not perform well on physical examinations, especially musculoskeletal and neurology examinations. Further examining student performance and having medical schools focus on their weaknesses may eradicate the need to conduct Step 2 CS for American medical graduates. Most medical students at the University of Toledo Medical Center expressed that they felt more than prepared for their physical skills examinations because of the multidisciplinary approach taken at their school.

They discerned that as they needed to fit the scheduling and cost of this examination into their busy fourth year schedule, the experience was not worthwhile. They stated that they do not believe it is necessary to test their proficiency in speaking to patients again, as this proficiency is tested and improved upon each day on the wards.

Moving toward a virtual examination based on the model of SVI, relying on medical school examination performance, and provision and grooming of skills during internship instead of conducting USMLE Step 2 CS are some adaptations that seem like they can be given consideration. Well-designed and conducted studies are needed to provide further information and may lead to dramatic changes in the testing and interview process.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

AAMC: Association of American Medical Colleges
CIS: Communication and Interpersonal Skills
CS: clinical skills
ECFMG: Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates
ICE: Integrated Clinical Encounter
IMG: international medical graduate
OSCE: Objective Structured Clinical Examination
SEP: Spoken English Proficiency
SVI: standardized video interview
USMLE: United States Medical Licensing Examination

Original Paper

Audiovisual Content for a Radiology Fellowship Selection Process During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Pilot Web-Based Questionnaire Study

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Abstract

Background: Traditional radiology fellowships are usually 1- or 2-year clinical training programs in a specific area after completion of a 4-year residency program.

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the experience of fellowship applicants in answering radiology questions in an audiovisual format using their own smartphones after answering radiology questions in a traditional printed text format as part of the application process during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hypothesized that fellowship applicants would find that recorded audiovisual radiology content adds value to the conventional selection process, may increase engagement by using their own smartphone device, and facilitate the understanding of imaging findings of radiology-based questions, while maintaining social distancing.

Methods: One senior staff radiologist of each subspecialty prepared 4 audiovisual radiology questions for each subspecialty. We conducted a survey using web-based questionnaires for 123 fellowship applications for musculoskeletal (n=39), internal medicine (n=61), and neuroradiology (n=23) programs to evaluate the experience of using audiovisual radiology content as a substitute for the conventional text evaluation.

Results: Most of the applicants (n=122, 99%) answered positively (with responses of "agree" or "strongly agree") that images in digital forms are of superior quality to those printed on paper. In total, 101 (82%) applicants agreed with the statement that the presentation of cases in audiovisual format facilitates the understanding of the findings. Furthermore, 81 (65%) candidates agreed or strongly agreed that answering digital forms is more practical than conventional paper forms.

Conclusions: The use of audiovisual content as part of the selection process for radiology fellowships is a new approach to evaluate the potential to enhance the applicant's experience during this process. This technology also allows for the evaluation of candidates without the need for in-person interaction. Further studies could streamline these methods to minimize work redundancy with traditional text assessments or even evaluate the acceptance of using only audiovisual content on smartphones.

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Introduction

Fellowship programs in radiology are usually 1- or 2-year clinical trainings in a subspecialty area after completion of a 4-year residency program. These fellowships therefore represent an optional sixth and seventh year of clinical training, although this may vary in different countries. Most radiologists trained in the United States complete a fellowship before formally entering practice. In a survey from 1999, 80% of fourth-year and 84.6% of third-year trainee respondents had accepted or were expected to accept fellowship offers [1]. In a survey from 2009, 93.4% of senior resident respondents planned to pursue fellowships [2]. Fellowship trainees often believe that they are less competitive in the job market without a fellowship, and that they may have an advantage in seeking subsequent employment in the same geographic region as that of their fellowship [3]. Starting salaries have also been noted to be low for residency-only graduates [4]. Furthermore, the selection process of the applicants could vary in different countries and institutions. Recent fellows appear to be more satisfied with their selection and application process than their program directors [4]. This study aimed to investigate the utility of audiovisual content as a part of the applicant selection process through the use of the applicants' smartphones. The applicant's experiences and perceptions with digital forms and questions were evaluated in comparison with traditional paper-printed tests currently used as the evaluation method in medical school

and during radiology residency in the country where this study was performed.

The current literature contains little information regarding the audiovisual content of radiology studies, especially regarding fellowship candidate selection methods during the application process [5,6]. Modern web-based technology and screen capture software allow for the development of an environment where audiovisual files can be easily created and shared for clinical and educational purposes, using cloud technology.

The COVID-19 pandemic has evolved rapidly in most countries and widely disrupted personal and professional lives, having also affected the process of selecting radiology fellows and radiology education [7,8]. In this study, audiovisual content using smartphones was used as a supplemental material for the radiology fellowship selection process. The aim of this study is to evaluate candidates' experience in using audiovisual content with their own smartphones, especially as an alternative method of evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining social distancing.

Methods

This study was approved by the institutional review board of the participating institutions and was compliant with the guidelines of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Informed consent was waived for participants included in the study after institutional review board approval. Our study used a 3-step approach (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Summary of the steps of the workflow of this study.
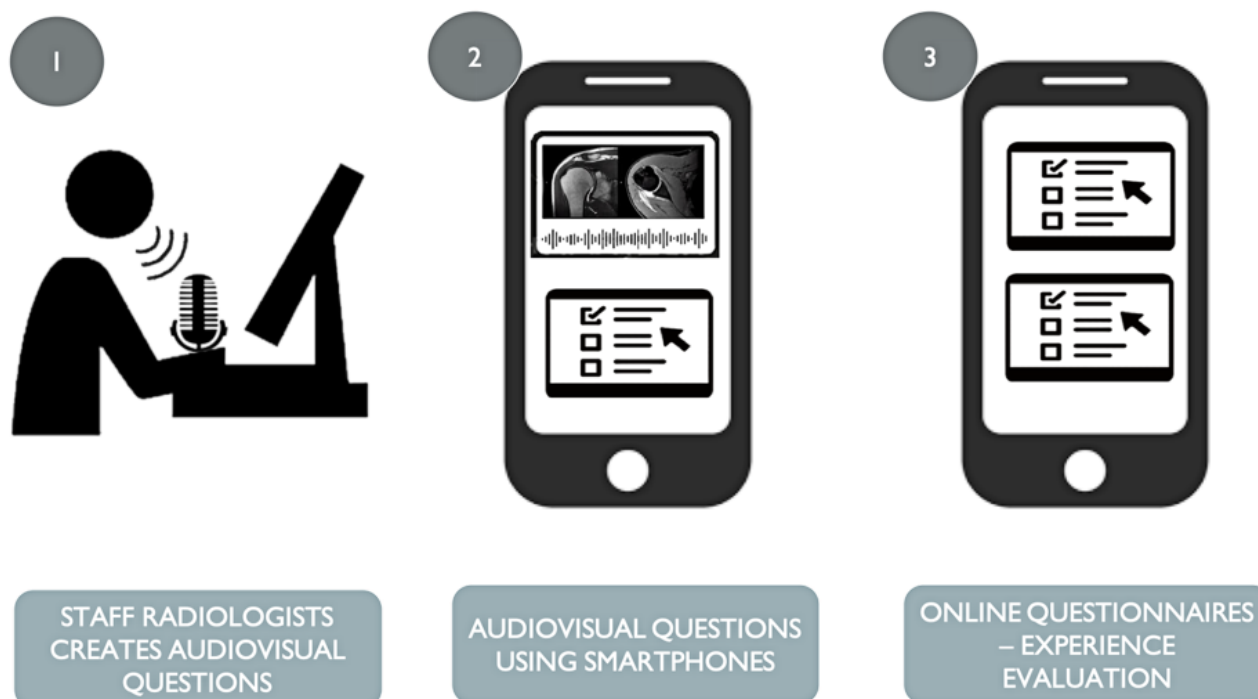
Step 1: one radiology staff member of each specialty (musculoskeletal, internal medicine, and neuroradiology) generated 4 audiovisual questions, each referring to radiology cases from institutional records. These audiovisual questions were generated using Screencast-O-Matic screen capture software (version 3.8.0, Screencast-O-Matic) in a personal

password-protected computer from the hospital. A standard radiology workstation dictaphone was used for audio recording. Videos were saved in MP4 format and uploaded to the institution's picture archiving and communication system using the software´s application programming interface in accordance with the guidelines of the Health Insurance Portability and

Accountability Act of 1996 with interoperability via HL7. This study included typical cases such as a "bucket handle" meniscal tear, subdural hematoma, and appendicitis, with a total of 6 questions in the audiovisual format. The cases included in the questions were anonymized using a built-in hot-key feature of the picture archiving and communication system to prevent the release of personal information contained in the radiology cases.

Step 2: the candidates received a web-based questionnaire (Google Forms) via email, which contained 4 audiovisual questions with multiple-choice answers for the subspecialty the candidate applied for. Each correct answer was automatically computed in the candidate's profile, and upon completion of the test, all the participants received an updated ranking of the evaluation via email.

Step 3: The candidates answered a final web-based questionnaire about their experience with using their own smartphones to access the test with questions in the audiovisual format. The questionnaire included questions to measure concordance with a Likert-type scale, with the exception of the question on the operating system of the smartphone and one regarding the use of earphones. The scoring system was based on a 5-point scale with scores ranging 0-4, where 0="totally disagree," 1="partially disagree," 2="neither agree nor disagree," 3="partially agree," and 4="totally agree."

The questions of the second questionnaire were as follows: (1) I would like to view my score immediately after the test is over; (2) I am used to watching audiovisual content on my smartphone; (3) I prefer to answer questions on traditional paper instead of the digital form; (4) answering digital forms is more practical than conventional paper forms; (5) images in digital forms have superior quality than printed in paper; (6) I feel safer answering in printed text than in digital forms; (7) the presentation of the cases in an audiovisual format facilitates the understanding of the findings; and (8) I felt in disadvantage due to the screen size of my smartphone.

The generation of the audiovisual radiology questions lasted <5 minutes for each case once each radiologist was familiar with the screen capture software. The purpose of the videos is to reflect the radiologist´s viewpoint in each case, including the sequences used to evaluate the findings and pointing to relevant alterations (Multimedia Appendix 1). Each audiovisual question comprised a video of <2 min, ranging in size from 2 to 12 megabytes. Those videos were uploaded in MP4 format to the web-based questionnaire (a Google Form) with the respective question and multiple-choice answers. All questions were sent to the applicants via email and contained a password-protected weblink. The candidates were instructed to open the questionnaires on their own smartphones and watch the audiovisual questions, using earphones for better audio quality.

The results are summarized using simple and relative (percentages) frequencies and represented by bar graphs and pie charts. The Fisher exact test was performed to analyze the associations between the questions and the candidate groups. Data graphics were produced using Microsoft Excel. Data analysis was performed using the R statistical program for Windows (The R Foundation) using the Rcmdr package and RStudio platform.

Results

The mean age of the candidates was 30.1 (SD 2.6) years, and the mean period since their graduation from medical school was 5.4 (SD ± 2.2) years. Most of the applicant's smartphones had an iOS operating system (n=77/98, 78.6%), and the remaining had Android smartphones. This difference was not significant among candidates of musculoskeletal, internal medicine, and neuroradiology subspecialties (P=.38).

Regarding the use of smartphones to watch any type of audiovisual content, most of the candidates answered that they frequently use their own device (n=77/123, 62.6%) and also using earphones for better audio quality (n=108/123, 87.7%). These findings are not significantly different among the 3 radiology subspecialties (P=.88).

To the question, "I would like to view my score immediately after the test is over," most of the applicants responded with "strongly agree" (n=94/123, 76.4%), although there was a significant difference among the 3 subspecialty groups where 51/61 (83.6%) strongly agreed in the internal medicine group, 30/39 (76.9%) in the musculoskeletal group, and 13/23 (56.5%) in the neuroradiology group (P=.02).

To the question, "I feel safer answering questions in printed text than in digital forms," most of the candidates responded with "neutral" (n=36/98, 36.7%). There was a significant difference in responses among the 3 subspecialty groups, with 8/19 (42.1%) of the internal medicine applicants, 3/32 (9.4%) of the musculoskeletal applicants, and 18/47 (38.3%) of the neuroradiology applicants responding with "agree" (P=.04).

The answers to the other questions were not significantly different among the radiology subspecialty groups (P>.05). Our findings regarding the responses from all candidates are summarized in Table 1. The great majority of applicants (n=122, 99%) agreed or strongly agreed that images in digital forms have superior quality to those printed on paper. In total, 101 (82%) applicants concurred with the statement that the presentation of the cases in audiovisual format facilitates the understanding of the findings. Furthermore, most candidates agreed or strongly agreed that answering digital forms is more practical than answering conventional paper forms (n=81, 65%).

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaire responses from all candidates (N=123).

Total	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Images in digital forms have superior quality than printed in paper, n (%)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0%	49 (40)	*73 (59)[a]*
The case presentation in audiovisual format facilitates the understanding of the findings, n (%)	0 (0)	6 (5)	16 (13)	*65 (53)*	36 (29)
I feel safer answering in printed text than in digital forms, n (%)	7 (6)	15 (12)	*46 (37)*	37 (30)	18 (15)
Answering digital forms is more practical than in conventional paper forms, n (%)	4 (3)	21 (17)	17 (14)	*54 (43)*	27 (22)
I prefer to answer questions on traditional paper instead of this digital form, n (%)	10 (8)	27 (22)	44 (35)	22 (18)	20 (16)
I felt unfavored due to the screen size of my smartphone, n (%)	21 (17)	39 (32)	*41 (33)*	22 (18)	0 (0)

[a]Italicized values represent the preferred answer.

Discussion

Principal Findings

This study was focused on the experiences of users with audiovisual content in digital questionnaires and not on the answers to the radiology questions that the candidates ranked by themselves. Most of the answers regarding the experience with this technology were positive, especially those suggesting that digital forms are more practical than conventional paper forms, radiology images and videos have superior quality than those printed on paper, and the presentation of the cases in an audiovisual format facilitates the understanding of imaging findings. These findings suggest that the adoption of this technology may increase the perception of quality during the selection process, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the last few years, little progress has been made in the format of the selection process of radiology fellows. The process usually varies from country to country and even among different programs in the same city. Program directors usually include traditional tests printed in paper, curriculum analysis, and interviews for a candidate's selection. In our institution, the fellows are selected on the basis of a multiple-choice test printed on paper, often in a spacious room with capacity of 200-300 people. After the printed test, the applicants are divided in 3 groups, namely musculoskeletal, internal medicine, and neuroradiology, for curriculum analysis and interviews. The ranking of the candidates is later publicized for all the participants.

New challenges have emerged from this pandemic, mostly regarding how to balance activities as close to normal as possible and following all security measures. A recent study proposed measures to maintain radiology education during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the use of web-based platforms constantly with case-based teaching, with read outs that can be attended over the internet and with screen sharing and chats [7]. Furthermore, "virtual rounds" with multidisciplinary case discussions and weekly article discussions are interesting approaches to preserve the feeling of normalcy [8]. Another study by Chong et al [9] suggested the development of a specific plan in response to the pandemic to ensure the safety and well-being of the radiology trainees. Those measures should include redistribution of work based on the clinical demand and pandemic status, promoting social distancing by reducing the number of radiologists in each rotation and reading rooms, using personal protective equipment for patient and staff protection, and maintaining radiology teaching using web-based platforms [9].

Audiovisual content using screen capture software is a promising tool with few reports in the literature, with applications in research and academia [10] and recently described as a technology to enhance traditional text reports of emergency musculoskeletal cases [6]. Videos narrated by the radiologist showing imaging findings have the potential to generate high-quality content useful for education and facilitate the understanding of imaging studies for the ordering physicians [6].

The dedicated audiovisual content in this study was focused on enhancing the experience of candidates during the selection process to simulate the evaluation of an actual case through narrated videos. Live or recorded audiovisual material may be used to increase communication between physicians and radiologists and may also be used as a teaching platform for case conference presentations and clinical rounds [6,10]. This technology could also enable physicians to better explain imaging findings to their patients on handheld devices, such as smartphones and tablets [10].

Social restrictions have been imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as those on face-to-face clinical consultations and the increased use of alternative technologies such as telemedicine and the use of smartphones [11]. Studies have reported the successful use of smartphones for fracture diagnosis in musculoskeletal trauma cases [12] and for the identification of pediatric supracondylar fractures [13]. In particular, 5G smartphone technology is a step forward in connection speed and efficiency, with the potential to facilitate web-based interactions as close to in-person activities, including patient consultations, monitoring, and high-speed data file transfer, including imaging studies [14]. To our knowledge, this is the first study to include smartphones and digital questionnaires with audiovisual content as part of the radiology fellowship selection process; therefore, the potential of this technology is still not fully evaluated.

An unexpected observation of our study was that 29.6% of the candidates indicated that they usually feel safer taking

paper-printed tests rather than completing digital forms, and 18.4% felt disadvantaged while answering the questions on their own smartphones owing to the size of the screen. This may be due to an insecurity of the impact of this new technology in the selection process. In our opinion, digital forms containing videos with the radiologist narrating the findings is a great tool to increase the experience of the candidates and approximate the viewer close to a real-time evaluation of cases. Another interesting observation is that most of the interviewed candidates frequently consume audiovisual content on their own smartphones (62.6%). A recent study demonstrated that approximately 59% of adults recently consumed health information on the internet, including social media platforms such as YouTube [15]. Furthermore, radiologic content on social media, usually accessed on smartphones, is an emerging technology with the benefit of reaching larger audiences than traditional educational methods [16]. We speculate that an audiovisual report with medical content meets the patient´s expectation of a dynamic way of expressing the findings of their imaging studies.

Limitations

One limitation that was noted during the study is that smartphone screen size and operating systems were not standardized. A bigger screen or even using tablets or notebooks could improve the experience of evaluating the audiovisual content of the questionnaires, but we opted to have our candidates use their own smartphones owing to the familiarity of the user with the device and its functionalities and to simulate the experience of receiving an examination to be evaluated on a smartphone, which is a situation often encountered by radiologists. We encouraged the applicants to use earphones and to rotate the smartphone horizontally for better audio and video quality, but we acknowledge that a bigger screen in notebooks could be better.

Furthermore, the questionnaires have important considerations, such as a limited number of questions (information bias) and a small sample size with a probable selection bias. Another limitation is that candidates may feel as though they are being watched during step 3 of the process, which could affect their behavior, as described by the Hawthorne effect [17]. Even with these limitations, the results show the potential of this new form of radiological fellowship selection. Therefore, these findings can be complemented by studies with a larger sample size and more comprehensive questionnaires.

Based on the data obtained in this study, the web-based questionnaire with audiovisual content using smartphones seems to have potential for the application process of candidates for radiology fellowship programs. There was a good response in terms of agility of evaluation and quality of information passed on to the applicants during the selection process, helping them during their first trimester of 2020 with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusions

This study focused on creating web-based questionnaires with smartphones and audiovisual radiology content as an alternative for the traditional in-person selection process with tests printed on paper. This was a pilot study during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic when measures have been taken to ensure social distancing and attempt to flatten the contagion curve. This method includes the potential to provide quick results, with the safety of password-protected questionnaires. Our evaluation suggests that audiovisual questions may simulate a real-time evaluation of radiology cases and may improve communication between the program directors and the candidates. The fact that the applicants found the audiovisual content in smartphones easier and faster to understand supports that observation. Further studies are necessary to access the acceptance of this form of the radiology selection process in other medical specialties. Additionally, video technology for interviews or the evaluation of remote procedures as part of the selection process should be included. Continued development of standardized web-based tests and questionnaires may encourage future acceptance.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

Multimedia Appendix 1
Example of an online question using audiovisual radiology content.
[MP4 File (MP4 Video), 1886 KB - mededu_v7i2e28733_app1.mp4]

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Tutorial

Incorporating Medical Students Into Primary Care Telehealth Visits: Tutorial

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about sweeping change in health care delivery, which has shifted from in-person consultations to a web-based format. Few medical schools provide web-based medicine or telemedicine training to their learners, though this is likely to be important for future medical practice.

Objective: This tutorial communicates a framework for incorporating medical students into primary care telemedicine clinics.

Methods: A third-year medical student and internal medicine attending physician from the Johns Hopkins University completed telemedicine clinic visits in April 2020 by using a variety of video platforms and via telephone calls.

Results: Nine telemedicine visits were completed over 4 clinic days. Our patients were, on average, aged 68 years. The majority of patients were female (6/9, 67%), and most appointments were completed via a video platform (6/9, 67%). Additionally, our experience is summarized and describe (1) practical tips for how to prepare for a telehealth visit; (2) technology considerations; (3) recommendations for participation during a telehealth visit; (4) debriefing and feedback; (5) challenges to care; and (6) student, care provider, and patient reactions to telemedicine visits.

Conclusions: Telemedicine clinics have been successfully used for managing patients with chronic conditions, those who have attended low-risk urgent care visits, and those with mental health concerns. Patients have reported high patient satisfaction scores for telemedicine visits, and the majority of patients are comfortable with having medical students as part of their care team. Moving forward, telemedicine will remain a popular method for receiving health care. This study has highlighted that medical students can successfully be integrated into telemedicine clinics and that they should be exposed to telehealth whenever possible prior to residency.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic era is a historic moment that is ushering in waves of challenges and the need for innovation. As a society, we have had to adapt to wearing face masks, working from home, and practicing social distancing measures to prevent the further spread of SARS-CoV-2 [1]. In alignment with these recommendations, the Association of American Medical Colleges requested a temporary suspension of medical student involvement in on-site clerkships that involve direct patient contact between March and April 2020 [2]. Almost overnight, medical schools and health care systems had to shift from in-person learning and appointments to a web-based format.

Defined as the use of telecommunication and electronic information to promote long-distance health care among patients and care providers, telemedicine is well suited to fill this gap. The practice of telemedicine is relatively new; its expanded use

began in the 2010s [3,4]. In spite of this increased amount of use, a review by Pourmand et al [5] highlighted that nearly 40% of medical schools did not offer any formal instruction in telemedicine as part of their curriculum in the 2017-2018 academic year. Without a standardized curriculum or learning objectives, medical schools and residency programs have independently adapted and created new web-based clerkships and telemedicine electives for medical students and trainees during the pandemic [6-8]. These web-based experiences provide opportunities for advancing students' clinical education but often have either limited or no patient interaction components [9]. However, there is no literature that informs clinicians and medical students about how to participate in telehealth visits in the primary care setting.

To address this gap in knowledge, this tutorial aims to provide a summary of experiences, methods, the lessons learned about telehealth from both the student and attending physician perspective, and a framework for incorporating future learners into telemedicine clinics.

Background

As in-person clinical clerkships were suspended for 2 months at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (March to May 2020), students were able to enroll in web-based learning offerings. However, these courses did not involve patient interaction. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic–related suspension of clinical clerkships, the coauthors (an attending internal medicine physician [SC] and third-year medical student [AB])

had begun working together as part of an elective primary care clerkship while AB completed her Master of Public Health program. AB had attended 4 in-person clinic sessions and, by the last clinic session, had been interviewing patients independently and reporting to SC. In March 2020, SC's clinic was converted to a fully remote, video visit–only clinic [10]. In April 2020, SC decided to try incorporating AB into the web-based clinic. The experience is summarized below.

Telehealth Visits: A Practical Guide

Prior to the Start of Web-Based Visits

SC and AB met via Zoom (Zoom Video Communications Inc) prior to the first clinic day to discuss the new clinic format, review expectations and objectives (Textbox 1), and practice navigating options for patient communication. It was agreed that SC would contact her patients prior to the clinic day to inquire whether they were comfortable with having a medical student start the visit, and AB would prepare for visits by reviewing each patient's medical record. As they had previously worked together, SC was comfortable with having AB connect to patients and start visits on her own for 10 to 15 minutes before SC joined the web-based room to hear AB present the interval history and jointly create an assessment and plan. They had decided that all communication about the patient would occur while the patient was present "in the room," as had been done in prior in-person visits. This information, and that which follows, is presented as a flowchart in Figure 1.

Textbox 1. Outlined objectives and expectations for medical students attending telehealth clinics. These objectives were adapted from the Genes to Society Longitudinal Clerkship Curriculum from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

Medical student expectations and objectives from telehealth clinic

- Experience the clinical practice of telehealth in a primary care setting through interviewing patients

- Assist in managing chronic disease in a telehealth setting

- Learn about how illness may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

- Foster clinical skills by delivering ambulatory telehealth care

  - Review a patient's medical record prior to the visit

  - Conduct a focused interview

  - Gather objective clinical data in lieu of an in-person physical exam

  - Formulate an appropriate assessment and plan

  - Communicate information to both care providers and patients

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Figure 1. Flowchart of steps for including medical students in telehealth. The flowchart is organized by the time periods before a clinic day. HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.
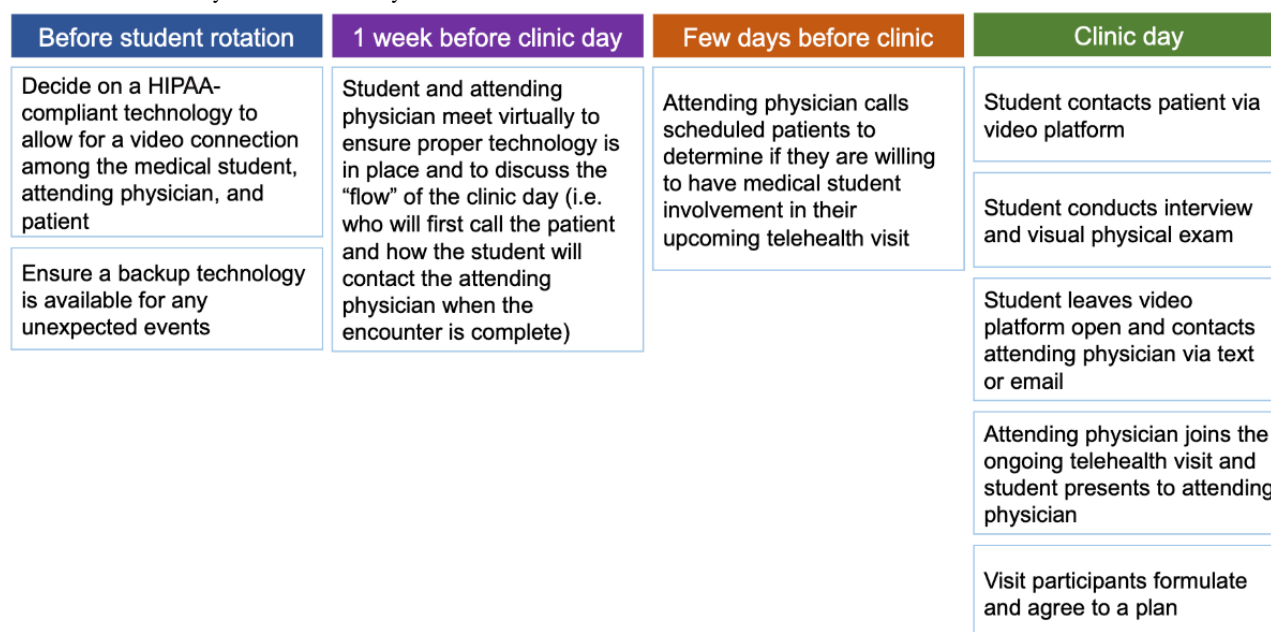
Technology

The Johns Hopkins health system uses Epic (Epic Systems Corporation), which has Polycom Telecommunications (Polycom Inc) built in as the default web-based visit communication app. This service accommodates up to 4 users, thereby allowing a medical student, patient, and attending physician to be present on the same screen during the visit. All users must download the Polycom app onto their computers, tablets, or phones and have access to both video cameras and microphones for communication. Polycom does not support direct messaging among parties. Recently, our hospital's Epic system has transitioned to using WebEx, a video platform hosted by Cisco that has an interface and functionalities that are similar to those of Polycom in terms of video visits. Messages between patients and care providers had to be sent through MyChart, a secure messaging platform hosted on Epic.

Another option for video visits was the Doximity app (Doximity Inc). Doximity can be used to conduct video visits with 3 users via cell phones or a desktop browser. When the care provider starts a video call, the patient receives a text message to join a secure video room via their cell phone's internet browser. A third user can be added by the provider who started the call. Doximity calls do not support synchronous messaging.

Zoom technologies can be used as well but were not explored for this clinical elective, as they were not approved for use in clinical encounters by our institution. Zoom meeting links must be password-protected to be used. All audio, video, and screen sharing data are encrypted, and the platform does not have access to identifiable patient health information. This service can host multiple parties and has synchronous messaging capabilities.

If patients are not able to join the visit via video link, the Doximity dialer was used by AB or SC to call patients from their private phones. This app displays the clinic's telephone number on the patient's phone, not the provider's personal phone number. A third party can be added to the call line.

All of the apps discussed are Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act compliant and use encryption methods so that both videos and messages between patients and care providers are secure [11]. Zoom technologies, Cisco technologies (WebEx), and Doximity all use the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) with 256-bit keys to encrypt meetings [12-14]. Polycom uses the AES with 128-bit encryption [15].

During the Visit

Before beginning the clinic day, both SC and AB were in private rooms in their homes to ensure patient confidentiality. These rooms provided neutral backgrounds and adequate lighting. Both SC and AB used headphones to prevent patient conversations from being heard by others if other people were present in their homes.

For each visit, AB and SC called patients 10 to 15 minutes before the visit start time. SC briefly introduced herself, explained her role during the visit, and provided context for why visits had shifted to a web-based format before exiting the meeting. Each visit was scheduled for 30 minutes. She gathered information about patients' reasons for the visit, their interval history, and performed a brief physical exam (appearance, mental state, and skin exams, if appropriate). Some patients recorded their blood glucose or blood pressure readings and, if they were relevant to their medical histories, AB collected these data. A handful of patients had physical exam findings captured on their cell phones as photos (eg, skin rashes), which they were able to share by presenting their phones to the webcam.

AB wrote progress notes in each patient's electronic medical record and pended relevant orders during visits. After 15 minutes, SC rejoined the room and AB provided a brief patient presentation as well as her initial thoughts. Then, SC gathered

more relevant data, and with the patient's input, all three participants discussed the next steps for the patient's care.

Debriefing and Feedback

After the last patient visit, AB and SC debriefed quickly to go over notes and what orders needed to be placed. AB completed progress notes within 1 hour after the visit. Afterward, she and

SC conducted a longer (about 30 minutes) call to go over further feedback.

During the feedback call, which mirrored the feedback provided during an in-person clinical session, SC and AB discussed each patient visit to highlight teaching points and offer feedback to AB. A summary of the guidelines from this section is provided and outlined in Textbox 2.

Textbox 2. Tips for incorporating medical students into primary care telehealth visits collected over 4 telehealth sessions. The tips are subdivided into the following categories: (1) prior to the telehealth visit, (2) technology considerations, (3) during the telehealth visit, and (4) debriefing and feedback.

Prior to the telehealth visit

- Decide what role the student will play during the visit (shadowing vs completing part or all of the web-based visit)
- Have the attending physician or a medical assistant reach out to patients to obtain permission for students to be a part of their care
- Frequent communication between the medical student and attending physician before, during, and after telemedicine visits is recommended.

Technology considerations

- Have a back-up plan if the first video communication platform does not work
- Use Doximity to mask outgoing phone numbers if communicating via phone

During the telehealth visit

- Conduct each visit in a quiet, private room to protect patient confidentiality
- Ensure that the patient is in a quiet, secure location at the beginning of the interview
- Describe the student's role in the patient's visit
- Student may exit the web-based clinic room if all materials have been covered prior to the attending physician's return
- Student may complete the patient presentation while in the web-based room

Debriefing and feedback

- Set time aside after each clinic day to provide timely and constructive feedback.
- The medical student can collect questions about patients and discuss them with the attending physician during this time.

Visit Characteristics

Over the course of 4 telehealth clinic sessions, SC and AB interviewed 9 patients. Patients were included if (1) their visits coincided with the clinic days when AB was able to join SC and (2) they were amenable to having a medical student involved in their care. Most appointments were completed via a video platform (6/9) instead of via telephone (3/9). Of the 9 appointments, 6 were annual or routine checkups and 3 were problem-focused visits (blood pressure, diabetes medication change, and posthospital discharge visits). At the time of writing, Maryland had mandated a stay-at-home order, and only urgent visits requiring in-person services were conducted in the office. None of the 9 patients we saw were invited for further in-person follow-ups after their initial appointment.

Challenges to Care

During this outpatient elective, a few challenges arose that were unique to telemedicine. Physical exams in telemedicine consults are limited to visual inspections and verbal interactions. One patient had a rash on his leg, and while it was initially difficult to share the image he had captured on his phone, he was able to align both screens to provide the team with a clear view. Based on the image and his history of present illness, we offered conservative topical therapy and advised that if symptoms

worsen, he would need to follow up with the dermatology department. Relying on visual inspection for more complex diagnoses can be challenging and may not be feasible through telemedicine alone. Perkins et al [16] described in their letter to the editor how their practice has conducted teledermatology visits—they relied on patients taking multiple high-resolution images and uploading them to MyChart (a patient portal that provides access to patients' medical records and facilitates communication with care providers) before their appointments. These hybrid approaches (ie, combining stored data with synchronous visits) can result in better, informed, visual physical exams and evaluations of patient concerns. Other studies have reported using guides for having patients conduct a self-physical exam either alone or with a partner [17].

A third (3/9, 33%) of the patients seen had conducted their visits via telephone, as patients were unable to troubleshoot their video connections. This means of communication further limits the physical examination of patients and increases the difficulty of building rapport with patients. However, for noncomplicated visits, the medical team was able to triage patient health concerns, reorder medications, and provide health counseling without difficulty.

SC and AB relied on patients to provide their own health data. This became important for focused follow-up visits in which blood pressure or blood glucose were monitored. These data are limited by patients' ability to use home health care devices and the accuracy of the devices themselves. The medical team did not have the capability at the time to validate self-reported data through home nursing or to invite patients to the clinic for blood pressure or point-of-care blood glucose tests. At the time of writing, the outpatient elective coincided with a state-mandated stay-at-home order issued by Maryland. Therefore, patients were only offered in-person consultations if they had urgent symptoms and were not routinely seen in person for follow-ups.

Reactions to Telemedicine Visits

Student Perspective

At the time of this clerkship, it was unclear when medical students would be able to return to the wards. AB found that this telemedicine elective added value to her medical education, thereby allowing her to further hone her skills in understanding the patient history, formulating a differential diagnosis, and creating an appropriate assessment and plan. She learned to quickly build rapport with patients over web-based platforms, set an agenda, and adequately discuss health concerns. Similar to an in-person rotation, AB was able to present each patient case to the attending physician of her patients, pend orders, write clinical notes, and receive real-time feedback from the supervising physician. Importantly, while telemedicine is a step removed from physically seeing and touching patients, it provided the safest alternative during the COVID-19 pandemic that still emphasizes learning with and from patients. AB did not have formal training in telemedicine prior to this elective. She realized that training in telemedicine is a skill set that will be useful and necessary in the postpandemic world, especially for follow-ups that involve discussing results or conducting psychiatric-focused visits.

Attending Physician Perspective

SC was eager to include a student in telehealth visits, as it seemed clear that determining how to do so would be necessary to continue the meaningful education of medical students in outpatient care delivery during and after the pandemic. AB and SC were able to navigate the technology prior to the visits well enough that SC was confident that they could be successful in providing care and medical education at the same time. SC was concerned that contacting patients before the visits might be overly burdensome but found that it was not. Since AB was able to start the visits early, there was enough time for her to present patients to SC and keep within the visit time. SC's patients seemed to genuinely enjoy having a student involved in their care, and SC appreciated the opportunity to return to teaching during such a stressful time.

Patient Perspective

This study did not collect postvisit feedback from patients; therefore, the patient perspective was gleaned from interactions during visits and a review of the literature. All patients agreed to have a medical student as part of their care. Patients had extended appointment times, as the medical student started the visit early and the attending physician joined after 15 minutes. Additionally, patients were able to hear their visit presentation and add or clarify information. A survey of outpatients by Simons et al [18] showed the majority of patients are comfortable with medical students being involved in their care if permission was sought beforehand, they knew the role of the medical student, time limits were set, and patients were able to speak with the attending physician. Other studies have confirmed these findings—patients reported having more time with the care team and found that it was beneficial to have medical students involved in their care [19,20].

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that for some medical needs, such as managing patients with chronic conditions or mental health concerns and those who have attended low-risk urgent care visits, telehealth has successfully provided patients with a socially distanced means to receive care [21,22]. Although there is a loss of in-person connection, this method of care delivery provides both patients and care providers with the opportunity to connect without the need for personal protective equipment while decreasing the burden of travel for all participants, and the ability to receive and deliver medical care in a safe, comfortable environment. Early studies have reported that patient satisfaction scores for primary care and family practice telemedicine appointments were comparable to those for in-person visits [23]. Importantly, these data indicate that telemedicine is a successful alternative to in-person visits, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic [24].

From the learner perspective, telehealth visits do not fully replace the experience and education of seeing patients in clinics, such as the experience of completing physical exams and appreciating both normal and abnormal findings. Frequent and ample communication between an attending physician and student facilitated real-time discussions about patient health concerns, troubleshooting technology, and methods for improving visits with patients. Telemedicine has a valuable role in medical education and is an essential skill for the modern medical student [6,25].

This tutorial aims to provide practical advice from both the student and attending physician perspective to successfully integrate medical students into telehealth clinics. Medical students must be exposed to this method of care delivery prior to residency, and their practice can start now [26].

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

AES: Advanced Encryption Standard

Original Paper

The Impact of Systematic Review Automation Tools on Methodological Quality and Time Taken to Complete Systematic Review Tasks: Case Study

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Abstract

Background: Systematic reviews (SRs) are considered the highest level of evidence to answer research questions; however, they are time and resource intensive.

Objective: When comparing SR tasks done manually, using standard methods, versus those same SR tasks done using automated tools, (1) what is the difference in time to complete the SR task and (2) what is the impact on the error rate of the SR task?

Methods: A case study compared specific tasks done during the conduct of an SR on prebiotic, probiotic, and synbiotic supplementation in chronic kidney disease. Two participants (manual team) conducted the SR using current methods, comprising a total of 16 tasks. Another two participants (automation team) conducted the tasks where a systematic review automation (SRA) tool was available, comprising of a total of six tasks. The time taken and error rate of the six tasks that were completed by both teams were compared.

Results: The approximate time for the manual team to produce a draft of the background, methods, and results sections of the SR was 126 hours. For the six tasks in which times were compared, the manual team spent 2493 minutes (42 hours) on the tasks, compared to 708 minutes (12 hours) spent by the automation team. The manual team had a higher error rate in two of the six tasks—regarding *Task 5: Run the systematic search*, the manual team made eight errors versus three errors made by the automation team; regarding *Task 12: Assess the risk of bias*, 25 assessments differed from a reference standard for the manual team compared to 20 differences for the automation team. The manual team had a lower error rate in one of the six tasks—regarding *Task 6: Deduplicate search results*, the manual team removed one unique study and missed zero duplicates versus the automation team who removed two unique studies and missed seven duplicates. Error rates were similar for the two remaining compared tasks—regarding *Task 7: Screen the titles and abstracts* and *Task 9: Screen the full text*, zero relevant studies were excluded by both teams. One task could not be compared between groups—*Task 8: Find the full text*.

Conclusions: For the majority of SR tasks where an SRA tool was used, the time required to complete that task was reduced for novice researchers while methodological quality was maintained.

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KEYWORDS

systematic reviews; automation; technology assessment; methods evaluation; case study; comparison study

Introduction

Overview

Health care guidelines have reported systematic reviews (SRs) as providing the highest level of evidence to answer research questions [1]. The findings of SRs are favored as they synthesize all published evidence on a topic in a rigorous, reproducible, and transparent way [2]. SRs are used to answer any type of research question, including interventional, diagnostic, prognostic, or etiological [1]; in addition, they are pertinent to many different stakeholders' groups, from clinicians to researchers to policy makers. However, SRs are time and resource intensive [3] and may be out of date by the time they are published [4]. The time from SR registration to publication has been reported as taking five authors approximately 67 weeks [5], with time frames ranging from 6 months to 2 years [6]. Even rapid reviews, which omit some of the steps of a full SR, have been reported to take 7 to 12 months [7].

To improve time to completion, systematic review automation (SRA) tools have been developed to either fully automate or semi-automate one or more specific tasks involved in conducting an SR. These include searching multiple databases [8], deduplicating search results [9], identifying disagreements between screeners [10,11], and assessing risk of bias (RoB) in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) [12]. In 2015, the International Collaboration for the Automation of Systematic Reviews (ICASR) was formed to enable resource sharing between groups developing SRA tools [13].

However, despite SRA tool availability, the tools have not been translated into practice, primarily due to distrust of the tools [14]. This may be caused by a lack of transparency of machine learning systems and a shortage of studies evaluating the SRA tools [15]. The third ICASR meeting in 2017 identified the need to overcome barriers to SRA uptake [16]. A potential solution is to evaluate SRA tools in a real-world setting, on real SRs, to test their performance. This case study was designed to do that in the health care field of chronic kidney disease.

Research Questions

When comparing SR tasks done manually, using standard methods, versus those same SR tasks done using SRA tools, (1) what is the difference in time to complete the SR task and (2) what is the impact on the error rate of the SR task?

Methods

A case study on the methods used to undertake an SR of RCTs delivering a health care intervention was conducted and has been reported according to the STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) statement [17].

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Ethics approval was not sought; all participants are authors on this manuscript and the SR tasks undertaken were in an SR in which ethical approval was not required.

Case Study Participants

An expression of interest was sent to the Bond University Faculty of Health Sciences and Medicine, Australia, seeking researchers planning to commence an SR of RCTs. The only group to volunteer had their SR used in this case study. The SR was conducted by a team of four researchers using current Cochrane methodology [2] and reported using PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines [18]. Two of these researchers (CM and CR) were novice researchers completing their first SR under the supervision of two experienced researchers who were not involved in this case study. These two novice researchers (CM and CR) were sampled as the participants on the manual team.

A second expression of interest was sent to the faculty seeking two other researchers not involved in the SR to comprise the automation team. This expression was sent to researchers in the same discipline (ie, nutrition and dietetics) to ensure sufficient knowledge of the SR topic. The only interested candidates (SM and GC) took on the role of the participants on the automation team. As new postdoctoral researchers, they had some experience of being part of an SR team (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of study participants' roles and experience.

Team and participants (initials)	Team role	Research role	Coauthor of completed SRs[a] (eg, middle author), n	Lead author of completed SRs[a] (eg, first author), n
Manual team				
CM	Primary	PhD student	0	0
CR	Secondary	PhD student	0	0
Automation team				
SM	Primary	Postdoctoral researcher	0	3
GC	Secondary	Postdoctoral researcher	1	0

[a]SR: systematic review; published, accepted for publication, or under review.

Case Study Systematic Review

The SR used in this study—*Prebiotic, probiotic, and synbiotic supplementation in chronic kidney disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis*—has been published [19]. To complete the SR, four databases were searched, 717 results were deduplicated, 596 titles and abstracts were screened for inclusion, 16 studies were included, and 10 studies were meta-analyzed (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of the completed and published systematic reviews (SRs) [19].

SR task	SR task description	Value, n
Run the SR	Databases searched	4
Run the SR	Trial registries searched	2
Deduplicate the search results	Records to be deduplicated	717
Deduplicate the search results	Records left after deduplication	586
Screen the titles and abstracts	Studies to screen	586
Find the full text	Full texts required	40
Screen the full text	Full texts for screening	40
Extract the data	Full-text articles extracted (ie, characteristics of studies and outcomes)	16
Assess the risk of bias	Full-text articles requiring risk-of-bias assessment	16
Write the results	Full-text articles qualitatively synthesized	16
Conduct a meta-analysis	Full-text articles meta-analyzed	10

The Systematic Review Tasks Conducted in the Study

The manual team conducted the SR tasks required to complete a draft of the background, methods, and results sections of the SR; in total, this comprised 16 SR tasks (Table 3 [8,9,12,20,21]) [22]. The automation team conducted the tasks that had an SRA tool available; this comprised six SR tasks. Where an SR task is normally done by a single investigator, such as deduplicating search results, it was done by a single participant—the primary researcher—on each team. Where an SR task is normally done by two people, such as screening the search results, it was done by two participants—the primary and secondary researchers—on each team.

Table 3. List and evaluation criteria of all systematic review (SR) tasks and systematic review automation (SRA) tools used.

SR task No.	SR task	SRA tool used	Evaluation criteria
1	Formulate the question	N/A[a]	N/A
2	Check for similar reviews	N/A	N/A
3	Write the protocol	N/A	N/A
4	Design the systematic search	N/A	N/A
5	Run the systematic search	Polyglot Search Translator [8]	Completed by one participant; the number of different types of errors were counted.
6	Deduplicate the search results	Deduplicator [9]	Completed by one participant; deduplicated EndNote libraries were compared to a deduplicated reference standard data set.
7	Screen the titles and abstracts	SRA-Helper[b] [20]	Completed by two participants; EndNote libraries of the included and excluded studies were compared. A wrongfully excluded study was considered an error.
8	Find the full text	EndNote, SRA-Helper [20], and SARA[c] [21]	Completed by one participant; the number of references ordered through the library was compared.
9	Screen the full text	SRA-Helper [20]	Completed by two participants; EndNote libraries of the included and excluded studies were compared.
10	Conduct a citation analysis	N/A	N/A
11	Extract the data	N/A	N/A
12	Assess the risk of bias	RobotReviewer [12]	Completed by two participants; the risk-of-bias assessments were compared to a reference standard created by two experienced systematic reviewers external to the two teams.
13	Synthesize the data	N/A	N/A
14	Rerun the systematic search	N/A	N/A
15	Conduct a meta-analysis	N/A	N/A
16	Write the results	N/A	N/A

[a]N/A: not applicable; this task did not have any relevant SRA tools.

[b]SRA-Helper: Systematic Review Accelerator Helper.

[c]SARA: System for Automatically Requesting Articles.

The Systematic Review Automation Tools Used in the Study

The decision-making framework used to select the five SRA tools used in this study considered the following: (1) tools that were freely (ie, no cost) available for use, (2) tools that were familiar to the experienced author (JC) in order to aid the participants, (3) availability of help guides, and (4) tools that could be applied to as many tasks as possible.

Polyglot Search Translator [8] was selected to automatically translate search strings between various health databases. Deduplicator was selected to detect duplicate records from the search results, allowing the user to view them and then select which ones to keep and which to discard. The Systematic Review Accelerator Helper (SRA-Helper) was selected to interface with EndNote to enable assignment to groups (ie, screening) using a hot key (eg, the space bar), thereby replacing the normal drag-and-drop method used when screening in EndNote. SRA-Helper was also used to help find the full text by interfacing with EndNote to enable hot keys to conduct a title search for articles in a set of predetermined locations: the Bond University Library catalog, PubMed, and Google Scholar. The System for Automatically Requesting Articles (SARA) was selected to interface directly with the Bond University Library system to request up to 500 full texts at a time with a single click. The fifth and final tool used was the RobotReviewer tool [12]. This tool allows users to upload the PDF of an RCT; it will then provide an RoB assessment in four of the seven domains of the Cochrane Collaboration's RoB tool [23]: random sequence generation, allocation concealment, blinding of participants and researchers, and blinding of outcome assessment (Table 4).

Table 4. Systematic review automation (SRA) tools used in this study.

SR[a] task No.	SR task	SRA tool used	SRA tool description
5	Run the systematic search	Polyglot Search Translator [8]	This tool translates searches from either a PubMed or Ovid MEDLINE search string into a search string that can be used in multiple other databases.
6	Deduplicate the search results	Deduplicator [9]	This tool allows the uploading of sets of references; it then detects and removes duplicate references.
7	Screen the titles and abstracts	SRA-Helper[b] [20]	This is an automation script used to move references into groups within EndNote software using a predetermined set of keyboard shortcuts.
8	Find the full text	SRA-Helper [20] and SARA[c] [21]	SRA-Helper is an automation script used to search predefined locations, such as library websites, PubMed, and Google Scholar. SARA is a tool that allows for the bulk requesting of articles (ie, document delivery) from an institutional library.
9	Screen the full text	SRA-Helper [20]	This is an automation script used to move references into groups within EndNote software using a predetermined set of keyboard shortcuts.
12	Assess the risk of bias (RoB)	RobotReviewer [12]	This is a machine learning system that automatically assesses RoB for four of the seven domains defined by the Cochrane Collaboration's RoB tool; it also highlights the supporting text for these assessments.

[a]SR: systematic review.

[b]SRA-Helper: Systematic Review Accelerator Helper.

[c]SARA: System for Automatically Requesting Articles.

Outcomes

The outcomes recorded and compared were (1) the time taken to complete each task (in minutes) and (2) the error rate for each task (count).

Comparison of Outcomes Between Teams

For the single-participant SR tasks (ie, run the systematic search, deduplicate the search results, and find the full text), the primary manual team participant (CM) was compared to the primary automation team participant (SM). For the dual-participant SR tasks (ie, screen the titles and abstracts, screen the full text, and assess the RoB), the time and errors of the primary and secondary participants on each team were added together.

Time Taken for the Systematic Review Tasks

The time taken for each SR task was recorded separately for (1) undertaking the SR task and (2) learning about the SR task. Learning about each SR task included discussion with experts, reading help guides, or watching help videos. Time was recorded by each individual participant by noting the time they started work on the SR task and noting the time they finished work on the SR task. The total time spent on each task was calculated by subtracting the start time from the finish time. If a task was split over several work sessions, participants added together the times for each work session for each task to give the total time. Timing was paused if the participants foresaw a delay of 5 minutes or longer. The recording of times by the manual team began at *Task 5: Run the systematic search.* Times reported before this were retrospective estimates made by the participants.

Measuring the Methodological Quality of Each Systematic Review Task

Methodological quality was measured by the number of errors each team made for each SR task. As most SR tasks, as well as errors made during task performance, differ substantially, so did the way we evaluated each SR task.

Evaluation of Systematic Review Task 5: Run the Systematic Search

The systematic search was evaluated by counting the number of different types of errors made during the translation process. The errors were determined by a Cochrane information specialist and health librarian (David Honeyman; see Acknowledgments) with over 10 years' experience. The librarian was blinded as to which team had done the translations. Error criteria are listed in Table S1 in Multimedia Appendix 1.

Evaluation of Systematic Review Task 6: Deduplicate the Search Results

The deduplicated EndNote libraries were compared to a reference standard data set. This reference standard was created and the comparison made by an experienced information specialist (JC). This reference standard was created blind prior to the results from the manual and automation teams being made available. Any unique studies removed and the number of duplicates missed were recorded as errors.

Evaluation of Systematic Review Tasks 7 and 9: Screen the Titles and Abstracts and Screen the Full Text

EndNote libraries of the studies after screening and dispute resolution from both teams were compared by an experienced information specialist. An incorrectly excluded study was considered an error. The total number of references that were included and moved to the next task (ie, obtain full text) was also recorded. Any incorrectly excluded studies were sent to the senior author on the published SR, who did not participate in this case study.

Evaluation of Systematic Review Task 8: Find the Full Text

Both teams ran the EndNote *Find Full Text* feature. Once this was completed and EndNote had automatically found as many full texts as it could, the teams attempted to find the remaining ones. This is when the evaluation between teams started. The number of references that were not found and had to be ordered through the library was the evaluation criterion. However, due to differences in institutional access by participants, the results of this evaluation were not reported.

Evaluation of Systematic Review Task 12: Assess the Risk of Bias

An RoB reference standard was created by two experienced systematic reviewers: an experienced information specialist and an epidemiologist. RoB assessments were compared to the reference standard by the experienced information specialist, and the number of disagreements with the reference standard were counted. A two-level deviation in the domain rating (eg, a *high* RoB rating instead of a *low* RoB rating) was counted as an error. A single-level deviation in the domain rating (eg, *unclear* RoB instead of *low* RoB) was recorded as a difference of opinion.

Results

The SR and comparison study began in August 2017. The comparison study was completed at the end of March 2018, while the SR was published in October 2018 [19].

Time Taken to Conduct Systematic Review Tasks

The approximate time taken for the manual team to produce a draft of the background, methods, and results sections (ie, 16 SR tasks) was 126 hours (Table 5). Approximately 101 hours were spent doing all the tasks, and approximately 25 hours were spent learning about the tasks. For the SR tasks where times were compared (ie, SR *Tasks 5-9* and *12*), the total time taken by the manual team was 41 hours and 33 minutes. The time spent doing the SR tasks was 35 hours and 28 minutes, while the time spent learning about the SR tasks was 6 hours and 5 minutes. The automation team took 11 hours and 48 minutes to complete all the SR tasks. The time spent doing the SR tasks was 10 hours and 30 minutes, while the time spent learning about the SR tasks was 1 hour and 18 minutes (Table 5). The times spent on *Task 12: Assess the RoB* were not equivalent, as the RobotReviewer tool only partially automates the task. It assessed RoB in four of the seven domains, while the manual team assessed RoB in seven of the seven RoB domains.

Table 5. Time taken for the manual and automation teams to learn and complete each systematic review (SR) task.

SR task No.	SR task	Total time, hours:minutes		Time doing task, hours:minutes		Time learning task, hours:minutes	
		Manual	Automation	Manual	Automation	Manual	Automation
1	Formulate the question	1:00[a]	N/A[b]	1:00[a]	N/A	0:00	N/A
2	Check for similar reviews	1:00[a]	N/A	1:00[a]	N/A	0:00	N/A
3	Write the protocol	4:00[a]	N/A	4:00[a]	N/A	0:00	N/A
4	Design the systematic search	13:00[a]	N/A	13:00[a]	N/A	0:00	N/A
5	Run the systematic search	6:15	1:20	5:00	0:37	1:15	0:43
6	Deduplicate the search results	2:09	0:36	2:09	0:12	0:00	0:24
7	Screen the titles and abstracts	5:10	3:33	4:40	3:28	0:30	0:05
8	Find the full text	0:50	0:23	0:50	0:18	0:00	0:05
9	Screen the full text	3:29	3:44	3:29	3:44	0:00	0:00
10	Conduct a citation analysis	7:43	N/A	7:43	N/A	0:00	N/A
11	Extract the data	9:42	N/A	9:42	N/A	0:00	N/A
12	Assess the risk of bias	23:40	2:12[c]	19:20	2:11[c]	4:20	0:01[c]
13	Synthesize the data	10:00	N/A	8:00	N/A	2:00	N/A
14	Rerun the systematic search	0:22	N/A	0:22	N/A	0:00	N/A
15	Conduct a meta-analysis	16:00	N/A	10:00	N/A	6:00	N/A
16	Write the results	21:20	N/A	10:40	N/A	10:40	N/A
All tasks	Tasks done by both teams	41:33	11:48	35:28	10:30	6:05	1:18
All tasks	Tasks done by manual team	125:40[a]	N/A	100:55[a]	N/A	24:45[a]	N/A

[a]Approximate time only.

[b]N/A: not applicable; task not done by automation team.

[c]Task partially completed; four of seven domains assessed.

Quality of the Systematic Review Tasks

The manual team had more errors in *Task 5: Run the systematic search,* with eight types of errors made compared to three by the automation team. Regarding *Task 12: Assess the RoB*, the manual team had a total of 25 differences in opinion from the reference standard compared to only 20 from the automation team. The manual team had fewer errors in *Task 6: Deduplicate the search results* by identifying all duplicates while excluding one unique study, compared to the automation team who missed seven duplicates and removed two unique studies. The teams performed similarly for both SR screening tasks (ie, *Tasks 7* and *9*) (Table 6).

Table 6. Quality indicators of each task in the systematic review (SR) process.

SR task No.	SR task	Evaluation criteria	Manual team, n	Automation team, n
5	Run the systematic search	Number of different types of errors made	8	3
6	Deduplicate the search results	Number remaining after deduplication	586	594
6	Deduplicate the search results	Unique studies removed	1	2
6	Deduplicate the search results	Duplicates missed	0	7
7	Screen the titles and abstracts	Studies included	38	38
7	Screen the titles and abstracts	Relevant studies excluded	0	0
8	Find the full text	Full texts ordered from library	—[a]	—
9	Screen the full text	Studies included	30	22
9	Screen the full text	Relevant studies excluded	0	0
12	Assess the risk of bias	Same domain	31	36
12	Assess the risk of bias	Different domain	25	20
12	Assess the risk of bias	Errorss in domain	0	0

[a]Although done by both teams, a difference in institutional library access to journal subscriptions meant these tasks could not be compared.

Availability of Data and Materials

The data sets used and/or analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Discussion

Principal Findings

To complete a draft of the background, methods, and results of the SR, the manual team took approximately 126 hours. To complete the six SR tasks evaluated in this study, the manual team took approximately 42 hours while the automation team took 12 hours. This equates to potential time savings of 30 hours. Due to the small amount of time taken to learn how to use the SRA tools (ie, 2 hours), the time required to learn how to use SRA tools should not be a barrier to their uptake among novice researchers. Regarding methodological quality of SR tasks done with SRA tools, we found that the error rates between teams was minimal and would not significantly impact on the quality of the SR. The manual team had more errors in two of the SR tasks (*Tasks 5* and *12*) and fewer errors in one SR task (*Task 8*); neither team had errors in two of the SR tasks (*Tasks7* and *9*).

The automation team was faster in five of six of the SR tasks compared in this study, where the increased speed of four of the tasks was due to an improvement on a manual process. For instance, to modify search strings, researchers may use the *replace* tool in Microsoft Word to manually change the database syntax, or they may use a drag-and-drop process when screening in EndNote. This replacing of manual, tedious work with an SRA tool is an obvious benefit of automation. The other SR task where the automation team was faster was the RoB assessment. It is important to note that although the time reduction for assessing RoB was substantial in the automation team, this team only assessed four out of the seven domains while the manual team assessed all seven of them. The only SR task where the manual team was faster was *Task 8: Screen the full text*, although the times were similar (209 to 224 minutes; a difference of 7.5 minutes per researcher). This was most likely due to the SR task requiring the reading and comprehension of articles to determine if they were eligible; in this case, the manual team members were more experienced as the SR was on a topic of their expertise. This suggests that for SR tasks where the interpretation or understanding of information plays a major role, there are lessened potential time savings for SRA tools.

The total time difference between the manual team and the automation team was substantial and could be translated to significant cost savings in funded studies. The savings may be attributable to several factors. Due to variations within the novice researchers' experience (0-3 SRs each), it is likely that the time savings were due in part to participant experience. A lack of blinding and randomization may have contributed bias, where the automation team could have pushed themselves to finish the SR tasks faster than they would under normal circumstances. However, due to the vast time difference between groups and both groups being novice users, it is clear that the SRA tools were the primary contributor to the time savings. This finding has been confirmed in other studies. In an RCT, an SRA tool was found to speed up the translation of search strings across databases by 25%, or 15 minutes, per database [8]. A test of three different screening tools found time savings

of 154 to 185 hours for a fully automated approach and 61 to 92 hours for a semi-automated approach [24]. Another test of an automated screening tool on three SRs found a 50% reduction in screening workload in two of the SRs and a 40% reduction in the third [25]. Findings from this study align more with the findings of Wallace et al [25], with time savings between 25% and 50%. Further research is required to replicate and confirm the findings from this study in novice researchers to better understand the estimated time savings produced by SRA tools.

As all participants were novice users of the automation tools, the process to learn a new SRA tool may be comparable to the manual team learning to complete a new SR task. Although the availability of training and support for the SRA tools would have reduced the time spent learning to use them, similar SR training and support is routinely available at universities for standard manual methods.

It currently takes a long time for an SR to go from conception to publication (mean 67.3 weeks) [5]. A recent case study looking at time logs across 12 simulated SRs found the average time to complete an SR (mean 3821 records screened; 20 studies included) was 463 days (66 weeks) and 881 person-hours [26]. Individual tasks required were selecting studies (229 hours, 26%), collecting data (211 hours, 24%), preparing the report (202 hours, 23%), conducting the meta-analysis (149 hours, 17%), and descriptive synthesis (52 hours, 6%) [26]. The SR used in this study [19] was substantially smaller (586 records screened; 16 studies included) and less time was required, but the percentage of time spent on comparable tasks generally aligned: selecting studies consumed 39 person-hours (31%), collecting data consumed 43 hours (35%), preparing the report consumed 26 hours (20%), and conducting the meta-analysis consumed 16 hours (12%).

The total time and person-hours from conception to publication is still substantial for SRs that employ SRA tools [26]. A recent case study found that by focusing on a single SR, using SRA tools, and having experienced reviewers, a medium-sized SR of RCTs (1381 records screened; 8 studies included) could be submitted for publication within 16 calendar days (10 working days; 66 person-hours) from conception [21]. This case study also highlights a significant difference between the findings in a novice versus experienced researcher team already familiar with the tools. However, the topics in the experienced case study

and in this case study were different; in addition, further research is required to compare novice and experienced teams' performance on the same topic for firmer estimates of time and error rates to be obtained. Despite the topic difference, this case study had similarities in that it was a medium-sized review and it only included RCTs.

In the case study completed by the experienced reviewers, approximately 17 hours were required to conduct the six tasks that were completed by the automation team in this study, who took approximately 12 hours. Although the cases are not directly comparable, this suggests that while the experience of the researcher team is relevant, it is likely only a small driver of the time savings.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

This study was limited by its case study design, with only a single SR used in the comparison as well as variation in the experience of the novice researchers. The times estimated for *Tasks 1* to *4* of the study have less reliability compared to other steps, which should be considered when interpreting findings. The study was limited by the assessment of each SR task individually, outside of the context of the entire SR, which makes results harder to apply to a full SR done with SRA tools. Additionally, due to the niche nature of the research question, the number of studies identified by the search strategy was small compared to other SRs in health; this may have implications for generalizing to other SRs the overall time required to complete the review. Further, this case study was not registered in a trial or study registry database. A strength of the study is that the time measured was the time that each person engaged in active SR tasks, with breaks excluded from the reported time. Another strength is that the time spent learning about the SR tasks was recorded independently from the time spent doing the tasks. The final strength is that the SR used was a real research project, which means the impact of SRA tools can be shown in a real-world setting.

Conclusions

For the majority of SR tasks where an SRA tool was used, the time required to complete that task was reduced for novice researchers while methodological quality was maintained. Further research is required to confirm these findings.

Authors' Contributions

JC, CM, and SM were responsible for study conception and design. CM, GC, CR, and SM were responsible for acquisition of the data. JC, GC, and SM were responsible for analysis and/or interpretation of the data. JC and SM were responsible for drafting of the manuscript. JC, CM, GC, CR, and SM were responsible for critical revision of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

JC declares that he is a developer of some of the tools used in this study and has won prize money from the Australian Library Information Association to continue development of these tools.

Multimedia Appendix 1
Supplementary Table S1: Marking criteria for errors in search string translations.
[DOCX File , 36 KB - mededu_v7i2e24418_app1.docx]

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Abbreviations

ICASR: International Collaboration for the Automation of Systematic Reviews
PRISMA: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
RCT: randomized controlled trial
RoB: risk of bias
SARA: System for Automatically Requesting Articles
SR: systematic review
SRA: systematic review automation
SRA-Helper: Systematic Review Accelerator Helper
STROBE: Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology

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Viewpoint

Planning Engaging, Remote, Synchronous Didactics in the COVID-19 Pandemic Era

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Abstract

As part of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education requirements, residents must participate in structured didactic activities. Traditional didactics include lectures, grand rounds, simulations, case discussions, and other forms of in-person synchronous learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has made in-person activities less feasible, as many programs have been forced to transition to remote didactics. Educators must still achieve the goals and objectives of their didactic curriculum despite the new limitations on instructional strategies. There are several strategies that may be useful for organizing and creating a remote residency didactic curriculum. Educators must master new technology, be flexible and creative, and set rules of engagement for instructors and learners. Establishing best practices for remote didactics will result in successful, remote, synchronous didactics; reduce the impact of transitioning to a remote learning environment; and keep educators and learners safe as shelter-at-home orders remain in place.

Introduction

Residency programs provide weekly or daily in-person, synchronous, didactic instruction to meet the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) requirements for resident education [1]. Successful residency curricula are planned by using a thoughtful, systematic approach [2]. The ACGME recommends that educators establish appropriate goals and objectives for their curricula and decide on suitable instructional designs. Afterward, through program evaluation, educators use resident feedback, assessments, ACGME guidelines, graduate feedback, and specialty board certification requirements to make measured changes to their curricula [2]. As we transition to a more technologically advanced world, this approach has also been shown to work well in remote teaching [3].

In 2020, the implementation of shelter-in-place orders in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which was caused by the novel SARS-CoV-2, has tremendously disrupted regularly scheduled, in-person didactics for medical education programs [4-6]. Medical educators were compelled to transition from in-person lectures, simulations, and small groups to remote didactics [4,7,8]. Although many educators were familiar with accessing digital and prerecorded content for asynchronous learning, synchronous and remote didactics were less common prior to the COVID-19 pandemic [9]. Since 2008, the ACGME has allowed emergency medicine programs to use asynchronous-style learning to replace up to 20% of the required

synchronous didactic time [1]. Approximately three-quarters of emergency medicine residencies have implemented web-based, self-directed learning with preselected resources [10]. Several small studies have suggested that web-based teaching modalities for residents and medical students may be equally as effective as in-person teaching modalities in various situations, including simulated patient encounters, ultrasound training, and procedural training [11-13]. However, remote didactics have traditionally only represented a small portion of didactics in graduate medical education. Educators previously chose from a potpourri of in-person instructional methods, such as lectures, labs, simulations, case discussions, team-based learning, and gamified didactics [1,14]. Now, educators must achieve the goals and objectives of their program by predominantly using remote instructional methods while maintaining the quality and integrity of their educational outcomes (generally defined by in-service scores and board scores) [1].

Popular videoconferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, StarLeaf, and WebEx, are the new classroom and meeting spaces. However, many remote "etiquette" items, such as keeping oneself muted or disabling cameras to conserve bandwidth, may hinder an instructor's ability to interact with their audience and undermine the educational value of lectures. Previously effective methods of instruction, such as small-group instruction, team-based learning, gamification, and the use of audience response systems, may also be challenging to implement through these platforms; there may be technical disruptions due to a lack of familiarity with technology or due to connection issues [15,16]. It may also be difficult for learners to find a quiet, private place at home to attend didactics. Faculty members and students may experience additional distractions, such as childcare or other home responsibilities [17,18]. Furthermore, learners and faculty members may face additional stressors associated with COVID-19, such as mental health struggles, financial concerns, and housing disruptions. Such stressors may hinder their ability to attend didactics or focus [17,18]. In order to prevent interruptions in resident education or the decreased efficacy of resident education, it is important that we address these issues and find innovative methods for remotely conducting effective and engaging synchronous didactic sessions until in-person sessions can resume, the decision to hybridize curricula is made, or a transition to fully remote curricula becomes a reality [19].

After reviewing pre–COVID-19 pandemic literature on remote didactics and seeing a paucity of literature at the time of writing this paper, we herein suggest a list of best practices for planning and executing successful, remote, synchronous didactics during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. By building on the framework of Rubinger et al [20], which provides a theoretical approach to planning and executing remote conferences, our viewpoint paper aims to provide practical suggestions for planning multiple types of curricula and focuses on adapting existing, in-person lessons for immediate use while planning engaging lessons for future use [20].

Update the Curriculum

Much of the success of asynchronous learning comes from an individual's ability to work at their own pace and in accordance with their own schedule [21,22]. Synchronous didactics are often face-to-face meetings that require interactions, cooperation among groups, and responses to social cues that can present unique challenges during remote meetings. When transitioning to remote didactics, it is important to decide in advance which elements of an educator's curriculum can be easily adapted to remote learning and implemented immediately and which elements require modification to be successfully integrated into a remote setting. There are specific ACGME guidelines that dictate the foundations of resident education [1]. These will likely be the initial focus of remote updates, since they are core requirements. Even educational activities that initially appear to be difficult to modify for remote learning, such as standardized patient cases, case-based role play, simulation, and skills training, may be implemented successfully [23,24].

Although the modality of didactics are changing during the transition from in-person didactics to remote didactics, curricular goals and objectives will still need to be met to ensure that learners continue to advance and didactic curricula comply with ACGME guidelines. The Kern 6-step curriculum model for planning traditional didactics remains applicable, but it has been successfully updated to meet the needs of remote learning [25,26]. The Council of Emergency Medicine Residency Directors Academic Assembly has already released guidelines for implementing and evaluating digital scholarship that may be used to plan ahead for these changes [27]. We recommend starting with the conversion of required didactics by using simple strategies like group lectures and audience participation. Afterward, additional time may be used to create more engaging and in-depth programs. Flexibility and creativity are critical for finding new ways to achieve a desired curriculum.

Choose the Platform to Support the Activity

It is important to choose a platform or software that will support a program's specific needs, whether the intention is to host a didactic session that involves small-group breakout sessions, audience participation, or even simple large-group discussions. Institutional subscriptions may dictate the software that residency programs have access to or are allowed to use, but these institutional subscriptions also often provide additional features and functions that are not available in individual subscriptions. Although most platforms have similar functions, there may be unique features that make one platform more advantageous than others (Table S1 in Multimedia Appendix 1). For example, videoconferencing tools enable video-based dialogue between participants and instructors. Video livestreams allow instructors to broadcast their content; however, participants do not have access to interactive videos and are reliant on chat features or polls for interactions. Messaging platforms allow for real-time discussions among participants without the use of video. It is important to discuss institutional options with information technology groups to determine which

platforms are accessible within an institution and which ones are compliant with an institution's security policies. Consider using secondary applications and programs that can enhance one's ability to present an engaging didactic session that promotes participation. Audience response tools are useful for creating interactive presentations that allow for audience participation (Table S2 in Multimedia Appendix 1). Additionally, familiarize the team with each program's abilities and limitations and plan how to engage remote learners through the use of these tools. Be sure to also review a platform's how-to videos and tutorials when planning a meeting in order to become familiar with and effectively incorporate interactive features without disruptions. The tables included in Multimedia Appendix 1 are not an exhaustive list of options. New programs are continuously being released, and platform developers are adding new features on an almost daily basis to support customers' needs. This paper highlights some of the popular programs that we are familiar with and frequently use.

Learning Environment

A key element of being an engaging presenter is the optimization of both the audio and visual components of a setup [16,28]. Keep in mind that much of this advice applies to all meeting participants, regardless of participants' roles. In terms of audio quality, find a quiet space to host the presentation. Large rooms with bare walls and tiles will likely create distracting echoes, while small, carpeted rooms allow for clear sound quality [15]. Attempt to keep the amount of ambient noise to a minimum by alerting any housemates to the planned meeting or by leaving a sign on the door that tells housemates to not disturb the presenter. Avoid using high-demand internet streaming programs during the meeting to preserve bandwidth and prevent lag or a loss of connection. A clear, well-lit, and uncluttered video appearance is also important. Choose a space with minimal amounts of clutter or distractions in the background. Ideally, the camera should be placed just above eye level, which may require adjusting the chair or computer (eg, by using a stand or a stack of books) or using a free-moving camera [15,29]. When using multiple monitors, make sure to present from a front-facing monitor to allow for eye contact with the camera when presenting. Additionally, position the camera so that the speaker is seen from the chest up. This allows for a more natural view when showing any hand gestures. Everything that is needed for the meeting should be close to the presenter so that they can avoid standing up and moving around during the presentation [29]. Positioning the light sources in front of the speaker instead of behind the speaker will prevent backlight from obscuring the presenter's image [15]. Avoid the use of multiple different light sources, as this may "wash out" the image if the light sources are not correctly positioned. Additionally, the use of direct light often results in a harsh or stark appearance. This may be counteracted by using a light filter attachment or by bouncing indirect light off of a wall [29].

Technology

Once the meeting platform is chosen, ensure that the latest version of the software is downloaded and that there are no pending updates that will disturb the meeting. Use a computer rather than a smartphone or tablet to allow for large screen ratios [15]. Close any unnecessary background programs so that more computing memory is available. Turn on the "do not disturb" modes of the computer and surrounding devices that may interrupt the presentation [29]. Ensure that the program only shares the portion of the screen that participants should see and hide or close messaging services, emails, or other private information. Many experts suggest using headphones to avoid feedback loops from a computer's microphone, which can detect meeting sounds. However, many new devices have technology that automatically filters out sounds from meetings [29]. When using headphones, consider using the computer's microphone to achieve better sound quality. In our experience, computer microphones often provide better sound quality than headphone microphones, and professional microphones provide the best quality. Make sure all of the devices are powered and charged throughout the meeting [15]. When giving a presentation and using speaker notes, make sure to share the screen properly while still having access to the speaker notes. Additionally, be sure to have access to any other necessary tools while presenting, such as chat features, whiteboard features for annotations, and additional audience response programs that might be used during the presentation. Consider conducting a trial run with a friend or colleague to see how the setup appears on learners' screens, so that adjustments can be made as needed [29]. For certain activities, it may be helpful to have a cohost during the meeting to help with moderating chat rooms, asking questions, providing answers, or conducting breakout rooms. It is also important to ensure that technology is appropriately set up in advance to avoid interruptions that may reduce teaching efficacy and learner engagement [28].

Security

It is important to review the security options that are available on one's videoconferencing platform. In the COVID-19 pandemic era and remote meetings, "Zoombombings" (unwelcome and vocal meeting guests) are a potential security threat [30]. Especially when discussing patient care for the purpose of quality improvement, it is essential that one's videoconferencing platform has adequate security features, including encryption and meeting access control [31]. When creating a meeting, one should use a unique meeting ID instead of a repeated standard ID. This will limit a hacker's ability to find the meeting. Meetings can be protected by a password or be based on invitation lists, which only allow certain participants to enter a meeting. Zoom offers a "Waiting Room" feature that allows hosts to approve participants before they can enter a meeting. When setting up a meeting, restrict screen sharing so that permission must be granted for participants to share their screens. Settings can also be changed to mute all participants upon entry, which often eliminates disruptions from late attendees. With regard to meetings that are disrupted by a participant or hacker, Zoom offers a "Put Everyone on Hold" feature that stops the video and audio feeds until the host turns them back on. The host can also remove disruptive participants from a meeting. We recommend activating the feature that will not allow removed participants to rejoin the meeting. Knowing

how to appropriately secure the meeting is incredibly important to protecting the learning environment and improving the efficacy of didactics [28].

Engagement

Based on an institution's goals, set up specific rules for didactic engagement that can be distributed to participants in advance. Our didactic programs have a variety of faculty members, different postgraduate year (PGY) levels, and senior medical students. We recommend asking participants to change their on-screen name so that it is displayed as their first name, last name, and position (eg, "medical student 3," "medical student 4," "PGY1," "PGY2," "Fellow," "Attending," etc). This allows for the easy provision of assignments to small groups and allows lecturers to identify participants by their learning levels. Participants should be asked to keep their cameras on when they are in front of the computer (as a way to monitor participants' engagement) and to only turn their cameras off when they need to momentarily step away. Keep in mind that some learners may need to turn their cameras off to improve streaming quality or for personal reasons (eg, a nursing mother). It is best to privately message participants when requesting them to turn on their cameras so that these exceptions can be discussed rather than publicly calling them out. Some institutions also encourage participants to list their gender pronouns (he/him, she/her, and they/their) to facilitate easy interactions with audience members who may not have their video stream activated. Microphones should be muted in large groups and unmuted during free-form discussions or in small groups. On some platforms, the meeting host can mute an individual or all participants with the click of a button. This is helpful in case someone forgets to mute or unmute themselves or if one's sound becomes disruptive [29]. If a group chat function is available, remind participants that the main group chatroom should not be used for side discussions during a presentation; the group chatroom should be used to ask pertinent questions, make comments, or provide resources. Some platforms offer participants the ability to signal the speaker when they have questions with a "Raise Hand" button. Remind participants that when asking questions, there is often a keyboard shortcut key (eg, space bar, "M" button, etc) that temporarily unmutes the microphone while it is held down. This is perfect for asking questions in large group settings because the participant becomes muted again when they are done asking their question. Cohosts may help manage chatrooms or alert instructors to questions. Most platforms use a participant list to record attendance. Remind participants about whether lectures are to be recorded and inform them that all messages (including private messages) are logged.

Large Groups

We separate large group activities (all participants are in a single remote space) from small group activities (participants are split into multiple interactive breakout rooms) when planning didactics. We found that it was easy to convert in-person sessions with large groups to remote sessions and that large group sessions were an ideal format for inviting distant or well-known speakers for whom an in-person lecture may not have previously been feasible. However, remote didactics in a large group setting can make audience engagement and participation difficult. Participants may be easily lost in the crowd, and instructors may feel as if they are speaking to an empty room. We recommend several methods for making these large group sessions more interactive. The simplest tool is the chat box, which allows instructors to ask questions and provide answers to participants. This feature works best when the instructor is looking for a single correct response, as numerous responses may quickly become unmanageable in this space. Some platforms offer a polling option that keeps participants' answers organized in a way that is easy for both instructors and participants to visualize. Some software platforms also possess a whiteboard option that allows for on-screen annotation by audience members. This feature is especially useful for visual topics such as electrocardiograms and radiology images, as it provides learners with the ability to mark findings that they believe are important in real time for everyone to see. Even platforms that are traditionally used for messaging or posting, like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, can be used to disseminate interesting cases, radiographs, or electrocardiograms and conduct real-time assessments [32]. Audience response programs also provide unique audience engagement features that scale well for large groups (Table S2 in Multimedia Appendix 1). Such programs may be paired with resources such as Emergency Medicine Coach, Emergency Medicine Foundations, ECG Stampede, and other question banks to facilitate large-group participation.

Small Groups

Successfully promoting the engagement of small groups requires more advanced planning than the planning required for other didactics. Based on the activity, divide participants into specific groups. This may take several minutes depending on the chosen platform. Didactics such as team-based learning or small group discussions often work best with an equal mix of students of various PGYs and medical students [33]. In many conferencing programs, the host can preassign breakout groups by using the email address that was used to create a participant's account. To make this process more rapid, we found it helpful to create a web-based form in which residents entered their account email addresses (in case the account was created using a noninstitutional email). Creating group matrices for each specific group type in advance may help with making the uploading process easier. However, preassigning groups may not work or may prove to be time consuming in small residency programs or programs without protected time for face-to-face didactics in which residents attend conferences based on their work schedule. In this case, having the name and PGY in each participant's screen handle allows the host to easily sort the participants as needed for each specific activity. This may be performed in the background during a large group lecture to limit the amount of lost time between activities. Ideally, groups should have 5-8 members and 1-2 leaders, if feasible [33]. Ultimately, it will be up to the group leader(s) to ensure that all participants are engaged, but this is no different from the expectations in face-to-face didactic sessions.

Standardized patient cases can be adapted and administered to small groups via videoconferencing platforms. Standardized patients can answer questions that are presented by the interviewer, physical exam maneuvers can be narrated by the interviewer, and findings can be presented by the instructor in real time. For example, after a verbal interview regarding the elements of a patient history, a learner can transition to the physical exam portion by saying, "I am now going to listen to the heart, what do I hear?" Afterward, the instructor can provide the pertinent positive and negative findings. This also works for case-based role play in small groups with instructor supervision and instruction. Simulation sessions can be remotely conducted in small groups after a small amount of advanced preparation. A simulation technician can prepare slides with pictures or videos of a patient monitor, electrocardiograms, imaging studies, and pertinent physical findings that will be shared by the facilitator. This is what would normally be done during in-person simulation sessions. The instructor is still able to act as the confederate or nurse while the technician shares their screen with the group. With even more preparation, skills training can also be remotely accomplished by sending kits with prearranged materials to learners by mail or having learners pick the items up from a central office. The learners will then have the training materials and be able to remotely follow a videoconference lesson in which an educator shares videos of how to use the materials and practice the skills intended. It is important to recognize that there may be a more time-intensive remote conversion for these types of synchronous didactics, and they can be difficult to administer without advance testing and practice.

Interaction

As previously mentioned, large group sessions can be made more interactive by asking questions to the audience and allowing them to respond verbally or write responses with the chat feature. Blank slides can be inserted into presentations to act as a whiteboard for group annotations. Polls can be added regularly throughout the lecture to keep the audience involved or to ask relevant questions. Kahoot! offers presenters the ability to ask questions in a competitive quiz format, and the premium version allows for presentations with integrated questions. Ultrasound and procedure lectures can be enhanced by using multiple cameras that allow the audience to see an ultrasound screen or procedure and the presenter at the same time. Game show–style didactics, such as Jeopardy and Family Feud, can also be used in both large and small group settings to promote engagement. Consider combining gamified learning with escape room–type challenges or pick-a-pathway–style learning sessions for smaller groups. We have successfully done this with toxicology-related and nervous system disorder–related materials [34,35]. Participants in gamified education sessions rated their engagement with these types of activities much higher than those in other types of small group sessions [36-38]. Even using collaborative webspaces, like those provided in Google Forms and Microsoft Forms, can allow participants to perform team brainstorming, provide responses to questions, or analyze patient cases. These webspaces can add important elements of group participation to remote didactics and breakout sessions. We

have even used collaborative webspaces to allow learners to ask questions and confidentially provide comments during sensitive or controversial lectures as a way to promote the freedom of discussion.

Archival Methods

Many remote meeting platforms offer the ability to record lessons. Some platforms also have the ability to record the speaker and the shared screen at the same time and place them side by side in the video. These recordings are especially useful for creating free, open-access medical education materials if the institution chooses to publish them [39,40]. Sites such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook are excellent platforms for sharing lectures. Additionally, when creating an archive of lectures, any learners who cannot attend a session can refer back to the archive, thereby turning the synchronous learning activity into an asynchronous activity. Some technical experts also suggest using a smartphone to record a redundant copy of the audio during a didactic session so that it may be used to supplement any audio interruptions resulting from bandwidth issues [15]. iPhones have an app called Voice Memos and Android has an app called Voice Recorder; these apps can be used for audio recording purposes. Archived lectures can also be used as tools for recruiting prospective residents and medical students.

Evaluation

Feedback is essential for evaluating educational programs and improving learner engagement [2]. During remote didactics, this should be no different. Services like Google Forms, Microsoft Forms, Survey Monkey, and Qualtrics can be used to create standardized evaluation forms that use Likert scales and prompt participants to share learning points from each activity in the same way that continuing medical education activities are evaluated [41-44]. This feedback is essential for promoting individual presenters' engagement in the continuous quality improvement of their content and identifying areas for future faculty development [1,2]. At the program level, this feedback provides data about the effectiveness of didactic sessions and various modalities for remote didactics that are necessary for future curriculum planning.

Asynchronous Learning

ACGME requirements allow residents to supplement their synchronous learning with asynchronous activities [1], and we recommend conducting prelearning and follow-up activities to promote knowledge retention. Prereading activities, which are associated with the "flipped classroom" curriculum style, can be used to prepare for small-group and team-based learning exercises [45]. The continuation of topic discussions through resident interest groups or mini fellowships can also be remotely achieved by video or email. Supplemental articles can be assigned, allowing learners to create summaries or discussion points with their mentors or education leaders. Follow-up cases, such as oral boards or simulations, can also be used to reinforce learning. Other options for asynchronous resources are high-quality educational blogs with content that mirrors

residency curriculum topics, such as the Academic Life in Emergency Medicine's Approved Instructional Resources Series [46]. Some board review sites and similar question bank sites allow for the selection of themed questions that can be assigned to learners as a supplemental activity. Do not forget to offer recorded lectures to learners who want to make up for a missed lecture or conference. Curating a variety of asynchronous learning options also helps learners identify resources and develop a sustainable strategy for their own self-directed and lifelong learning [47].

Conclusions

The world is experiencing difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed how we personally and professionally interact with each other. Educators are at a unique crossroad; they must update their teaching strategies and accommodate remote learning sessions that are equally as effective as in-person sessions. By embracing technology and taking a creative approach to develop engaging, remote, didactic sessions, we can limit the interruption of resident learning. The lessons we learned from our experiences may even change the way we approach in-person learning in graduate medical education in the future.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

Multimedia Appendix 1
Platforms, applications, and software adjuncts for remote synchronous education.
[XLSX File (Microsoft Excel File), 15 KB - mededu_v7i2e25213_app1.xlsx]

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Abbreviations

ACGME: Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
PGY: postgraduate year

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Review

Social Media and Medical Education in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Scoping Review

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought virtual web-based learning to the forefront of medical education as training programs adapt to physical distancing challenges while maintaining the rigorous standards of medical training. Social media has unique and partially untapped potential to supplement formal medical education.

Objective: The aim of this review is to provide a summary of the incentives, applications, challenges, and pitfalls of social media–based medical education for both trainees and educators.

Methods: We performed a literature review via PubMed of medical research involving social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and podcasts. Papers were reviewed for inclusion based on the integrity and power of the study.

Results: The unique characteristics of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and podcasts endow them with unique communication capabilities that serve different educational purposes in both formal and informal education settings. However, contemporary medical education curricula lack widespread guidance on meaningful use, application, and deployment of social media in medical education.

Conclusions: Clinicians and institutions must evolve to embrace the use of social media platforms for medical education. Health care professionals can approach social media engagement in the same ethical manner that they would with patients in person; however, health care institutions ultimately must enable their health care professionals to achieve this by enacting realistic social media policies. Institutions should appoint clinicians with strong social media experience to leadership roles to spearhead these generational and cultural changes. Further studies are needed to better understand how health care professionals can most effectively use social media platforms as educational tools. Ultimately, social media is here to stay, influencing lay public knowledge and trainee knowledge. Clinicians and institutions must embrace this complementary modality of trainee education and champion social media as a novel distribution platform that can also help propagate truth in a time of misinformation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEYWORDS

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Introduction

Social media has become an integral vehicle for the delivery and dissemination of health care education. Although social media use has become ubiquitous among patients, health care practitioners have shown variable enthusiasm with regard to adoption and engagement within the social media realm. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought virtual web-based learning to the forefront of medical education as training programs adapt to physical distancing challenges while maintaining the rigorous standards of medical training. Social media offers unique and partially untapped potential to supplement formal medical education. Indeed, social media has also provided clinicians who must practice social distancing for public safety with an opportunity and virtual space for educational discourse, community, camaraderie, and support. Notably, contemporary curricula on the application, deployment, and professional etiquette of social media are lacking. In this review, we provide a summary of the incentives and applications of social media–based medical education for both trainees and educators. Likewise, we highlight the challenges and pitfalls of social media–based medical education.

Methods

We performed a literature review by searching PubMed for medical research studies involving social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and podcasts. Papers were reviewed for inclusion based on the integrity and power of the study.

Results

Social Media: History, Evolution, and Use Prevalence

A social media platform is characterized as a web-based application that facilitates interactive creation and sharing of information and ideas through virtual communities. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and various podcast-hosting applications are among the most popular and established electronic communication tools and social media platforms. Each platform has its own individual smartphone mobile app with unique user interfaces. These individual platforms have variable degrees of flexibility and limitation on how content is posted. Twitter permits a total of 280 characters in a single tweet, whereas other platforms may be far more generous; for example, Facebook permits up to 63,206 characters in a single post. Images and videos are permitted on all platforms; however, the number of images and the permitted video length may differ between these platforms. Instagram is intentionally built to share images and short videos. YouTube is strictly built for videos and does not restrict video length. WhatsApp provides secure, encrypted messaging and sharing of audiovisual material capabilities within closed groups; however, it is restricted to mobile devices and does not have a traditional desktop, web-based user interface. These platform-specific parameters enable each social media platform to be used uniquely for different types of educational learning.

Critical to the global adoption of social media platforms is the parallel and complementary development of high-speed internet and smart devices, which laid the groundwork for their creation and global adoption. The ability to capture and share high-quality audiovisual media evolved from basic email and text messaging to dissemination of such media via social networks, with social network access transitioning from a computer interface to a smartphone interface. The prevalence of smartphone technology is undoubtedly widespread in the United States, with the estimated number of Americans who owned a smartphone rising from 56% in 2013 to 77% in 2017 [1]. Similarly, smart tablet use in America rose from 3% in 2010 to 51% in 2016 [2]. Social media platforms have similarly experienced widespread multigenerational adoption. In 2014, the percentage of Americans who reported using smartphones to access social media was 55% in those aged more than 50 years, 77% in Americans aged 30-49 years, and 91% in Americans aged 18-29 years [3]. The percentage of American adults who used at least one social media platform rose from 5% in 2005 to 72% in 2019. Additionally, in 2019, an estimated 75% of Facebook users, 63% of Instagram users, and 42% of Twitter users reported accessing each social media platform, respectively, on a daily basis [3]. Hence, the critical focus on the word "media" in social media bears much weight and recognition in considering the ramifications of how social media has changed society over the last 15 years as social media applications have become a part of daily life.

Physician Engagement on Social Media Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prior generations of physicians were apprehensive about engaging on social media out of concern about patient privacy, liability, lack of time, compensation, and familiarity with the technology; however, times are changing [4,5]. In a 2011 survey of 4033 clinicians, it was found that 90% of clinicians used at least one social media site for personal use and that 65% of clinicians already used at least one social media platform for professional purposes [6]. Many physicians use social media to find and share health information, communicate with colleagues and trainees, advertise their clinical practices, engage in health advocacy, impact health policy decisions, exchange developments in their fields, and publicize their research [7-12]. Over 140 uses for Twitter alone have been reported in health care [8]. Beyond social networking, clinicians have historically used social media platforms to directly engage and educate professional peers, house staff trainees, and patients.

The advent of COVID-19 further catalyzed the adoption of social media platforms such as Twitter to more rapidly disseminate and spread information about an unknown and contagious disease directly to frontline reporters as new information unfolded. This was critical in many instances, such as providing guidance on helping health care workers to maintain safety during aerosolizing procedures like endotracheal intubation [13,14]. Infected physicians even chronicled their disease course on Twitter to educate followers in a novel way that would not have even been possible 15 years ago [14]. Similar to the global response to the Zika virus, physicians and public health organizations such as the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health

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Organization also used Instagram to spread information to health care professionals and the general public from verifiable sources [15-17]. This rapid and efficient dissemination of information illustrates the significant influence social media can have on the spread of medical literature and knowledge among health care professionals.

The COVID-19 pandemic also disrupted medical education. It forced medical schools and residency and fellowship training programs to adapt to how they educate their trainees. Aided by virtual platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, formal educational lectures, noon conferences, grand rounds, and even medical conferences have migrated onto the web to adapt to the "new normal" [18]. With widespread cancellation of elective procedures, more procedural-based specialty training programs faced unique challenges to ensure their trainees would acquire adequate procedure skills. Gastroenterology fellowship programs adopted innovative virtual training webinars to strengthen participants' theoretical background in endoscopy and video sessions to review common technical aspects of endoscopy; they also reinvigorated the use of simulation-based training, in which it has been shown that skills learned in virtual reality simulation-based training are transferable to real life [18-21]. Although Zoom and Microsoft Teams are the newest widely adopted virtual platforms for formal medical education, informal medical education has been present on multiple social media platforms for years. Moreover, with social distancing measures actively in place, social media platforms help provide health care professionals with opportunities to establish community and camaraderie that would otherwise not exist. Specific use case examples of educational opportunities on each social media platform are illustrated below.

Facebook

The use of Facebook by patients to access and share medical information for chronic disease management has been well studied, and these studies may provide insight into how closed Facebook groups can be harnessed for medical education [7,22-30]. In some studies, researchers have looked at relatively small and homogenous groups of individuals who participate in well-moderated, closed Facebook groups to enhance weight loss in African American women [31], improve physical activity in patients with type 2 diabetes [30], and improve exercise motivation in patients with stable coronary artery disease undergoing cardiac rehabilitation [31]. These studies may provide important context on how Facebook groups can potentially enhance the learning experience of medical students. Although Facebook groups for medical education may pose privacy and logistical concerns, medical students are already using them to share learning tips, study strategies, and material and to discuss course content [32]. Faculty who engage in and moderate discussions with medical trainees in closed Facebook groups may help them better understand common problems and challenges that students encounter and, in doing so, may enhance the student experience [33].

Twitter

The historically robust engagement of physicians with Twitter has led to several educational opportunities for medical trainees and attending physicians alike. Opportunities such as virtual case conferences, Twitter-based journal clubs, and "tweetorials" provide physicians with the ability to communicate with and learn from experts in their field whom they otherwise would not be able to access. For example, #MondayNightIBD is a weekly social media version of a multidisciplinary case conference. The weekly hashtag is used to identify discussion threads about the treatment or management of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It brings together clinicians from around the world to share their knowledge and research as it relates to a complex or controversial topic or situation [34]. These weekly discussions foster sharing of scientific data or guidelines when available, highlight areas where there is disagreement in data interpretation, and identify areas where more research is needed. These de facto case conferences also empower patients with IBD to help educate clinicians to better understand the patient experience and ultimately help improve patient care [35].

Twitter-based journal clubs are similar to contemporary journal clubs. They exist across various medical specialties, including but not limited to internal medicine, radiology, nephrology, urology, and echocardiography [36-40]. Typically, a chat is organized around a specific published article [37]. Participants use hashtags to follow subjects of interest and contribute to discussions [37]. Many journal clubs, such as #NephJC, involve live discussions over a specific time period that foster a conversational tone and instant communication. Other journal clubs, such as #UroJC, involve focused chats over a period of a few days to foster global discussion, which fosters participation when convenient for individual participants [36]. Twitter-based journal clubs promote global participation from individuals in different fields and institutions and provide participants with equal opportunity to participate in a timely and efficient manner [36]. Participants can engage directly with research authors, who may be able to provide nuanced insight that otherwise may not have been revealed, and simultaneously provide postpublication peer review [36-39]. Chan et al [41] outlined the steps to establish a web-based journal club, and although it is challenging to establish, promote, and maintain a Twitter-based journal club, it is comparatively easy to participate [41].

A tweetorial is a collection of threaded tweets with the goal of educating those who read them [42]. The impact of tweetorials is restricted only by the author's audience. Users on Twitter can follow any number of individuals who use tweetorials as a teaching tool. Authors can use embedded pictures, videos, polls, or GIFs in tweets within the tweetorial thread, provide links to further reading or primary sources, and foster self-directed learning and teaching for health care professionals. Similar to Twitter-based journal clubs or case conferences, tweetorials enable individuals of varying hierarchical levels to directly interact who otherwise may not have the opportunity to do so [42]. Tweetorials can be used in formal medical education lectures and are a novel tool to summarize, educate, and disseminate complex topics in bite-sized teaching points.

WhatsApp Group Chat

As the field of medicine grows, new ways also grow for health care professionals and those in training to digest educational material. In formal medical education classrooms, didactic

lectures still predominate. Residency and fellowship training programs as well as continuing education for attending physicians are often at least partly driven by case-based learning through direct patient care. These important teaching points that physicians experience daily are often difficult to translate into formal lectures; however, widely available smartphones and software applications such as WhatsApp are disrupting and enhancing modern medical education.

WhatsApp is a secure, encrypted messaging software app that is restricted to mobile devices [43]. It enables physicians to securely share messages, links, documents, files, photographs, and videos in a timely manner and is an ideal smartphone app for modern medical education. It has been used to enhance and stimulate medical student education as an adjunct to formal classroom and problem-based learning [44-47]. The Duke University cardiovascular disease fellowship program successfully implemented a WhatsApp group chat to enhance the education of its fellows and continuing education of attending physician faculty [43].

Coleman and O'Connor's scoping review [44] detailed a practical and learning framework for those interested in establishing successful WhatsApp educational group chats. Many successful educational group chats implemented a faculty "champion" or leader to focus discussions and facilitate learning objectives. Some group chats implemented a prespecified curriculum, while others used a continuous learning environment seeded by real life clinical cases [43-47]. This approach may be ideal for smaller groups, such as residency or fellowship house staff. However, it can also be limited by the relatively small size of the group, as group chats are reliant on individual member engagement. Ultimately, these studies have shown that WhatsApp educational group chats, if structured well, create safe spaces on the web for peer discussion and are applicable in multiple fields and educational levels.

Instagram

The intuitive and interactive design and widespread use of Instagram create multiple teaching avenues for physician educators and learning opportunities for medical trainees. Sharing images to educate other health care professionals is not a new concept; however, the means and ease of doing so have changed. In 1992, the *New England Journal of Medicine* (*NEJM*) introduced *Images in Clinical Medicine* [48]. Today, *NEJM* continues to expose readers and Instagram followers to classic medical images and diagnoses to remind us of their clinical importance [49]. Although most users access Instagram for entertainment, a large number of physicians run medical Instagram accounts that enable users to learn in a unique and informal manner across multiple specialties, including but not limited to cardiothoracic anesthesiologist Dr Rishi Kumar (@RishiMD) [50], interventional cardiologist Dr Ali Haider (@YourHeartDoc) [51], cardiac electrophysiologist Dr Hafiza Khan (@Heart.Beat.Doctor) [52], interventional gastroenterologist Dr. Austin Chiang (@AustinChiangMD) [53], and pulmonary and critical care intensivist Dr. Cedric Rutland (@DrJRutland) [54]. Medical images and videos shared on Instagram give users access to virtual mini-case presentations

that enable users to learn small pieces of information that they otherwise would not have been able to find or access.

Instagram is an ideal medium to share visually appealing teaching points, and it has been described in several specialties, including dermatology, plastic surgery, radiology, infectious disease, and cardiology [55-60]. Specialists such as interventional cardiologists can easily share a descriptive case, serial electrocardiograms, and noninvasive and invasive (catheterization) imaging studies to illustrate pearls of wisdom about the art of medicine that may not be found in formal curricula [60]. The static page of an account enables health care professionals to curate a feed of teaching points with accompanying photos, videos, and written descriptions. Instagram stories complement static posts by enabling followers to directly interact with posted text, photos, or videos in real time. This also instigates further in-depth discussion beyond a single post.

For prospective medical students, Instagram Stories may show them a glimpse into the medical field to supplement formal shadowing opportunities. For medical students and resident physicians, Instagram can similarly supplement formal rotations to gain insight into various fields or niche specialties that they would otherwise not be exposed to in their current rotations. Moreover, learners can transcend geography, time zones, and schedules to engage and learn from educators whom they otherwise may not have had the opportunity to interact with. Importantly, this informal setting may also allow trainees to voice questions they may not otherwise feel comfortable asking. For educators, the Instagram platform can be used in parallel to complement formal didactic lectures, share unique and interesting cases, and continue to provide teaching points even after the formal lecture is complete.

YouTube

Videos are an excellent medium to illustrate highly complex medical concepts. Signaling this potential, in 2006, *NEJM* established *Videos in Clinical Medicine* to offer peer-reviewed educational videos. These videos are created for medical trainees to help them better understand complex procedures and advanced physical examination maneuvers to ultimately improve patient care [61]. In fact, supplemental patient education videos published on YouTube have been shown to improve patient understanding of dual antiplatelet therapy after drug eluting stent placement [62].

YouTube is the single largest video-sharing platform on the internet and is the leading free web-based source of videos used by students and health care workers worldwide [63]. A study of 91 second-year medical students found that 98% used YouTube as a web-based information resource. When a YouTube channel was created for these same medical students to compound their understanding of gross anatomy, 86% of the students accessed the channel, and 92% of these individuals agreed or strongly agreed that the channel helped them learn anatomy [64]. YouTube is clearly an effective medical education tool to improve trainee understanding and integration of information across a molecular and clinical level [65].

Numerous medical YouTube channels already exist. Some individual physicians use their channels to teach the general public about various health issues, such as Dr Danielle Jones, an obstetrician/gynecologist who produces content on her channel at *Momma Doctor Jones* [66]*,* and Dr Mikhail Varshavski, a family medicine physician better known on his channel as *Doctor Mike* [67]. Organizations and medical societies also provide high-quality medical educational videos but also focus on medical knowledge for the general public. These include the CDC [68], the American Heart Association [69], and health care systems such as the Cleveland Clinic [70] and Mayo Clinic [71]. Other hospital networks, however, feature videos that are specific to graduate medical education. The Houston Methodist DeBakey CV Education channel [72] features free educational videos of didactic courses, hands-on learning, and procedures for cardiologists, cardiovascular surgeons, and vascular surgeons. Several companies also provide high-quality medical education content specifically for students at various levels of training. Companies such as *Osmosis* [73], *OnlineMedEd* [74]*,* and *Dr. Najeeb Lectures* [75] are among the most popular channels that provide free videos with expanded levels of content with paid subscriptions.

Podcasts

Podcasts are ideal media for the delivery of medical education due to their relatively low cost, ease of access, and rapidity of distribution. Podcasts offer medical trainees the ability to learn at their own pace and can reinforce contemporary in-person lectures and can even foster more meaningful and engaging lectures. Podcasts are increasingly popular among medical trainees, with an increasingly more favorable perception over traditional books and journals [76]. The popularity of podcasts in medicine has grown alongside their success in the general public. In 2019, 139 active medical education podcasts existed across 19 different specialties; emergency medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics were the specialties with the most active podcasts [77].

Podcasts can have varying structure and focus. One popular podcast, *The Curbsiders* [78], has over 271 individual episodes and covers a wide array of individual topics across medical specialties and subspecialties. By interviewing and discussing topics with experts from an array of medical disciplines, the *Curbsiders* podcast can provide a "deep dive" into the diagnosis, management, and treatment of various medical conditions. Therefore, listeners are able to gleam valuable insight into the minds of experts they otherwise would not have access to. Other formats include a review of recent literature publications or as a companion to formal journal publications. For example, *This Week in Cardiology* [79] is a weekly podcast that delivers a summary of noteworthy publications in the field of cardiology; meanwhile, *JACC Podcast* [80] is another free podcast recorded by Dr Valentin Fuster, the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, that highlights the journal findings and provides a short summary of each manuscript.

It remains difficult to objectively assess the clinical utility of podcasts in medical education [81]. Although few studies have rigorously studied the efficacy of podcasts as teaching tools in medical education, their widespread use and adoption is evident [81,82]. In 2017, in a survey of 356 emergency medicine residents, it was found that 88.8% listened to a medical podcast at least once a month and that 72.2% reported that podcasts changed their clinical practice either "somewhat" or "very much" [82].

Discussion

Challenges and Pitfalls of Social Media Use by Health Care Professionals

First, we must acknowledge the prevalence and spread of misinformation on social media. This issue was present prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and is being exacerbated by it. Translating one's credibility in the medical community is often difficult to replicate on social media. Similarly, accounts with large followings may not have verifiable credentials to provide medical education. For instance, an analysis of dermatological hashtag use on Instagram showed that only 5% of the top dermatology-related posts were created by board-certified dermatologists [55]. This finding indicates that although many physicians and health care professionals may in fact be on Instagram and using it appropriately, the majority of the most popular posts are created by individuals giving advice who are not qualified to do so. Without widely effective medical therapies to treat COVID-19, clear communication with the general public is our most effective medical treatment to date and underpins the importance of combating misinformation on social media [83]. Although medical journals may provide open access to health care professionals, this research is not accessible to the general public, who receive most information through social media channels [84]. This topic warrants further discussion and research; however, this is outside the scope of this review.

There are several limitations in our review. Formal medical education programs adapted enthusiastically to physical distancing requirements during the ongoing pandemic; however, the effectiveness of these virtual learning modalities has not been extensively studied. It remains unclear if social media or virtual learning modalities are applicable as a true substitute when in-person learning is limited. Similarly, it remains difficult to study the effectiveness of individual components of social media in medical education due to the multifactorial nature of medical education and the individual user variation of social media. However, the utility of various aspects of social media, including Instagram Stories, tweetorials, YouTube videos, and podcasts, is evident. Future studies should focus on guiding clinical educators on how to best use these platforms effectively and appropriately for their respective specialty. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of health care professionals began engaging across social media platforms to provide informal medical education. However, the degree to which these web-based social media platforms will continue to be wielded for meaningful medical education following the eventual recovery from the pandemic is yet to be seen. Additionally, the trend toward the permeation of medical education across social media is apparent on platforms such as Reddit, TikTok, and Clubhouse; however, due to the limited

availability of studies assessing educational content on these platforms, they were not included in our review.

For health care professionals, uniform training in proper use of social media is often insufficient. Many medical and educational institutions forbid active social media engagement by their trainees or provide vague guidelines on its use. As a result, unprofessional or perceived unprofessional behavior by health care professionals remains an ongoing issue. Organizations such as the Association for Healthcare Social Media and social media campaigns such as #VerifyHealthcare are concrete steps by health care organizations and individual professionals to combat this chronic issue [85,86]. However, larger institutional culture shifts and further formal studies are needed to evaluate how best to leverage social media to positively impact medical education.

Although these challenges are not new, they do complicate the already difficult task of using social media as an educational tool. As previously detailed, WhatsApp has been successfully integrated into formal medical school classes and informal cardiovascular disease fellow training [43-47]. YouTube channels and podcast series may be some of the most effective methods for educators to supplement trainee education. However, there may be challenges to formally incorporate these media and platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook into formal medical education curricula. Therefore, these platforms remain supplemental resources for trainees, professionals, and patients alike. Future studies should examine how to best supplement contemporary medical education with each respective social media platform.

Studies should isolate differences between educating health care professionals in various stages of training. We surmise that there will be specialty-specific variations with regard to ideal platforms as well.

Future social media studies should implement process-evaluation strategies to ascertain which specific aspects of social media have the greatest impact. A conceptual framework was developed to aid future researchers in establishing studies on social media. This framework, known as the Therapeutic Affordances of Social Media (TASoMe), is grounded by the biopsychosocial model, or the interconnection between biology, psychology, and socioenvironmental factors [87]. TASoMe has been used to study social media use in brain cancer, endometriosis, and mental health [87,88]. It can aid researchers in systematically generating evidence-based research in a stepwise fashion and can be particularly useful for future studies on Facebook groups to educate trainees on chronic disease management [87].

It also remains difficult to quantify the academic impact of physician engagement on social media. As health care professionals engage on social media, they will gradually redirect their time from other responsibilities. Unfortunately, contemporary criteria used by academic institutions to evaluate individuals for academic promotions and tenure may not fully encompass the impact of social media posts or publications [89,90]. Expanded altmetrics for each social media platform can supplement contemporary metrics that aid in academic promotion or financial reimbursement in contract negotiations.

Lastly, contemporary studies on Facebook in medical education focus on perceived digital professionalism and likely reflect generational attitudes toward social media [91,92]. For better or worse, some residency program directors routinely survey public social media profiles of potential candidates, which directly influences residency match rank lists [91]. Teaching institutions must adapt to the changing web-based landscape and integrate realistic social media best practice guidelines into formal medical school, residency, and fellowship training program curricula to ensure that current and future generations of physicians are well equipped to use social media platforms meaningfully, responsibly, and professionally.

Conclusion

Social media platforms may come and go, and their engagement patterns may fluctuate; however, their impact on modern society is incalculable. The seeds of social media were enriched by separate yet intertwined technological advances that served as the building blocks of a communication revolution and spawned these integrative and seemingly inescapable social media platforms. In a time period that requires novel communication and teaching methods, social media can put the "social" back into physical distancing and medical education. The characteristics of each social media platform endow them with unique communication capabilities that have never before been seen in telecommunication history. Their use as educational tools must be approached with accelerated caution and monitored as they are implemented. Further studies are needed to better understand how health care professionals can most effectively use social media platforms as educational tools. Health care professionals can approach social media engagement in the same ethical manner that they would with patients in real life; however, health care institutions ultimately must enable their health care professionals to do this by enacting realistic social media policies. Institutions should appoint clinicians with strong social media experience to leadership roles to spearhead these generational and cultural changes. Ultimately, social media is expected to play a permanent role in influencing lay public and trainee knowledge. Clinicians and institutions must evolve to embrace and champion these platforms to preserve educational integrity and public trust.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

CDC: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
IBD: inflammatory bowel disease
NEJM: New England Journal of Medicine
TASoMe: Therapeutic Affordances of Social Media

Original Paper

Analysis of Cyberincivility in Posts by Health Professions Students: Descriptive Twitter Data Mining Study

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Abstract

Background: Health professions students use social media to communicate with other students and health professionals, discuss career plans or coursework, and share the results of research projects or new information. These platforms allow students to share thoughts and perceptions that are not disclosed in formal education settings. Twitter provides an excellent window through which health professions educators can observe students' sociocultural and learning needs. However, despite its merits, cyberincivility on Twitter among health professions students has been reported. *Cyber* means using electronic technologies, and *incivility* is a general term for bad manners. As such, *cyberincivility* refers to any act of disrespectful, insensitive, or disruptive behavior in an electronic environment.

Objective: This study aims to describe the characteristics and instances of cyberincivility posted on Twitter by self-identified health professions students. A further objective of the study is to analyze the prevalence of tweets perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable while describing patterns and differences in the instances of cyberincivility posted by those users.

Methods: We used a cross-sectional descriptive Twitter data mining method to collect quantitative and qualitative data from August 2019 to February 2020. The sample was taken from users who self-identified as health professions students (eg, medicine, nursing, dental, pharmacy, physician assistant, and physical therapy) in their user description. Data management and analysis were performed with a combination of SAS 9.4 for descriptive and inferential statistics, including logistic regression, and NVivo 12 for descriptive patterns of textual data.

Results: We analyzed 20 of the most recent tweets for each account (N=12,820). A total of 639 user accounts were analyzed for quantitative analysis, including 280 (43.8%) medicine students and 329 (51.5%) nursing students in 22 countries: the United States (287/639, 44.9%), the United Kingdom (197/639, 30.8%), unknown countries (104/639, 16.3%), and 19 other countries (51/639, 8.0%). Of the 639 accounts, 193 (30.2%) were coded as having instances of cyberincivility. Of these, 61.7% (119/193), 32.6% (63/193), and 5.7% (11/193) belonged to students in nursing, medicine, and other disciplines, respectively. Among 502 instances of cyberincivility identified from 641 qualitative analysis samples, the largest categories were profanity and product promotion. Several aggressive or biased comments toward other users, politicians, or certain groups of people were also found.

Conclusions: Cyberincivility is a multifaceted phenomenon that must be considered in its complexity if health professions students are to embrace a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Students' perceptions and reports of their Twitter experiences offer insights into behavior on the web and the evolving role of cyberspace, and potentially problematic posts provide opportunities

for teaching digital professionalism. Our study indicates that there is a continued need to provide students with guidance and training regarding the importance of maintaining a professional persona on the web.

Introduction

Background

Over the past decades, social networking services have significantly improved communication and connection for millions of people worldwide. Twitter has been a particularly popular social networking platform since its launch in 2006 and currently has more than 330 million active users per month [1]. This platform enables users to post a short message with images or videos, exchange ideas or information with other users, and customize their information streams via a unique subscribing function (ie, following) [1]. The microblogging feature of Twitter allows users to share their thoughts within a limited number of characters, thus helping them to reorganize and polish their ideas concisely [2,3]. Owing to its ubiquitous nature, simplicity, and user connectivity, Twitter is widely used for a variety of purposes.

Twitter and Health Professions

A growing body of research has identified Twitter as a useful tool for health care provider development [4,5]. Health care providers and health professions students use Twitter in various ways, including for intraprofessional and interprofessional mentoring and networking [6-8], knowledge development and discussion [9], idea and information sharing [10], teaching and learning [11,12], and contacting or communicating with patient groups [5,13,14]. Twitter is well positioned as a creative and convenient tool to help health care providers and health professions students develop skills beyond traditional boundaries [15].

Despite its advantages, previous studies on social media, including Twitter, have identified potential problems that may arise from misuse and misinterpretation. Health care professionals are among the sources of health-related information most trusted by the public [16]. Although students are not yet licensed experts, by sharing tweets while disclosing their identities as health professions students, they can earn public trust; conversely, their improper use of Twitter can have unexpected consequences. For instance, tweets perceived as misleading or lacking in sensitivity may cause the information conveyed to be perceived as inaccurate or may unintentionally offend some audiences, and such tweets can be preserved permanently [17].

Health care providers and health professions students can invade patients' privacy by disclosing their personal information on Twitter or by sharing detailed clinical scenarios that the patients or their acquaintances can easily recognize [18]. Moreover, by displaying profanity, offensive language, aggression toward other health professionals, product promotion, violence, or any violation of patient confidentiality on Twitter, they could

damage their reputation or lose public confidence [19-21]. Such misuses of Twitter can undermine its potential benefits, create misconceptions about health care professionals, and affect the privacy of health care providers and their colleagues and patients.

To maximize the benefits of Twitter use by health professions students, it is essential to promote cybercivility, or behavior in an electronic environment that reflects the norms and mutual respect that characterize the professional culture to which users belong and the society in which they live, learn, and work. In contrast to cybercivility, cyberincivility is defined as "direct and indirect interpersonal violation involving disrespectful, insensitive, or disruptive behavior of an individual in an electronic environment that interferes with another person's personal, professional, or social well-being, as well as one's learning" [22]. An understanding of the prevalence and properties of cyberincivility among health professions students can provide the foundational knowledge needed to develop instructional strategies and administrative guidelines regarding the use of social networking services to promote and maintain cybercivility in health professions education.

Research Aim

This study aims to describe the characteristics and instances of cyberincivility posted on Twitter by self-identified health professions students. The specific objectives were to (1) analyze the prevalence of tweets that could be perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable for a health professions student and (2) describe the patterns and differences in instances of cyberincivility posted by those users.

Methods

Design and Sample

We used a cross-sectional Twitter data mining method to collect quantitative and qualitative data from August 2019 to February 2020. The sample was taken from health professions students in various disciplines, including medicine, nursing, dental, pharmacy, physician assistant, and physical therapy. We included only tweets written in English by users who self-identified as health professions students on their user description, but we did not limit the geographic location. cross-sectional Twitter data mining method

Ethical Considerations

This study was reviewed and declared exempt by the institutional review board of Duke University (Pro00106123). To protect users' privacy and their digital rights, we deidentified all identifiable personal information (eg, name, user identification, location, and affiliation) after data analysis. We also paraphrased all quotes presented as examples to prevent

backtracking while maintaining their original meanings. Only data relevant to the purpose of this study were collected, and a secure, shared drive was used to store and manage all research data.

Data Collection: Eligible Twitter Account List Development

Initially, we identified potential user accounts by searching for 50 hashtags (Textbox 1) through the desktop version of BirdIQ v1.6 [23], a cross-platform data extraction program tailored to Twitter queries using preselected hashtags. The search results were returned in a multitabbed Microsoft Excel [24] workbook that included tweeting accounts.

The search terms (Textbox 1) allowed us to compile original tweets that were written in English and contained a designated hashtag over a given period (ie, August 28, 2019, to September 25, 2019). We set the time interval to 1 week and ran the BirdIQ program once a week on the same day of the week and at the same time. As a result of this process, 12,360 tweets containing one or more of the 50 hashtags were collected over 5 weeks. After removing duplicates, the remaining 10,267 tweets were linked to 5671 accounts. We removed 1556 duplicates and excluded accounts based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria summarized in Textbox 2.

Textbox 1. Hashtag list.

Medical students:

- #medicalstudent; #medschool; #medicalschool; #usmleprep; #usmlepreparation; #usmlexam; #usml; #futuredoctor; #medicalcollege; #medschoolthings; #medstudenttwitter; #premed; #medstudentlife; #medstudentblog; #lifeofamedstudent; #medical_student

Nursing students:

- #studentnurse; #nursingstudentproblems; #nursingschool; #nclexrnexam; #adnstudent; #bsnstudent; #msnstudent; #dnpstudent; #futurebsnrn; #futurern; #futurenurse; #futurenp; #futurenursepractitioner

Students in other disciplines (dental, pharmacy, physician assistant, and physical therapy):

- #dentalschool; #dentalstudent; #nbde; #futuredentist; #physicianassistantstudent; #PAschool; #futurePA; #PANCE; #pharmacystudent; #futurepharmacist; #pharmacyschool; #NAPLEX; #futurehealthcareprovider; #futurehealthprofessional; #healthstudent; #health_student; #futurephysicaltherapist; #futurePT; #PTstudent

A search string example:

- #nursingstudent -filter:retweets lang:en since:2019-9-17 until:2019-9-23.

Textbox 2. Account inclusion and exclusion criteria.
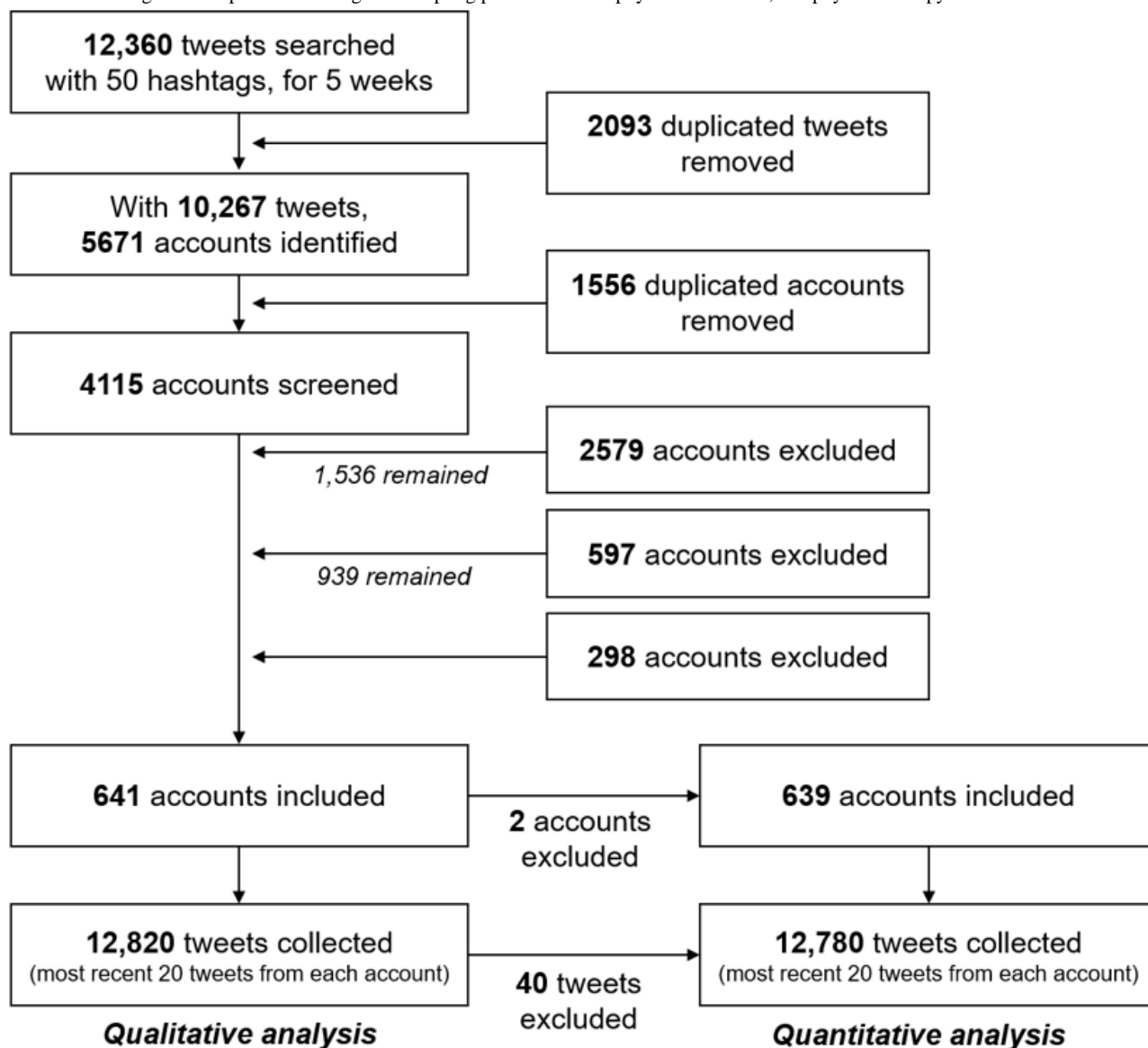

Account inclusion criteria:

- Belongs to a student identified as a current health professions student (ie, medicine, nursing, dental, physician assistant, and physical therapy) on the user description

- Is written primarily in English

- Has more than 100 followers at the time of data collection

- Has more than 50 tweets written at the time of data collection

- Is open to public

Account exclusion criteria:

- Belongs to a postlicensure professional in clinical clerkship

- Belongs to a student not self-identified as such on the user description

- Belongs to a premed, prenursing, or research-only PhD student

- Suspended or locked over the course of data collection

- Is institutional, with an aim to provide information, education, or commercial advertisements to health professions students

- Has over 70% of tweets not written in English

Owing to the floating nature of Twitter [5], the users made changes to their accounts during the data collection period. It was difficult to exclude all ineligible accounts with one screening, so 2 researchers (EC and HJ) independently reviewed each account's profile and content 3 times. We held regular

team meetings, discussed the eligibility of accounts based on the criteria, cross-checked the results, and agreed to create additional cut-off criteria (ie, the number of overall tweets and followers) for the final screening (Figure 1). After multiple screenings of ineligible accounts (eg, deleted, banned, locked,

or user graduated during the screening; Textbox 3), we ended with a total of 641 health professions student accounts for qualitative analysis and 639 for quantitative analysis (Figure 2).

Figure 1. A flow diagram to depict data mining and sampling procedures. PA: physician assistant; PT: physical therapy.

Textbox 3. Account exclusion criteria for multiple screening.

Account exclusion criteria for first screening (n=2579):

- Not a health professions student account (eg, school, institution, administrator, organization, commercial, business, research only, and not relevant); uses language other than English; user not in nursing, medicine, physician assistant, physical therapy, dental, and pharmacy fields; and not open to public

Account exclusion criteria for second screening (n=597):

- User currently working as a health care professional; unclear user identity; and not open to public

Account exclusion criteria for third screening (n=298):

- Less than 100 followers; less than overall 50 tweets; uses language other than English; not a current student account; and not open to public

Account exclusion criteria for fourth screening (n=2; 40 tweets):

- Deleted and unable to check profile images

Figure 2. User account selection and data analysis process. PA: physician assistant; PT: physical therapy. Number of data used for analysis is provided within parenthesis in superscript.
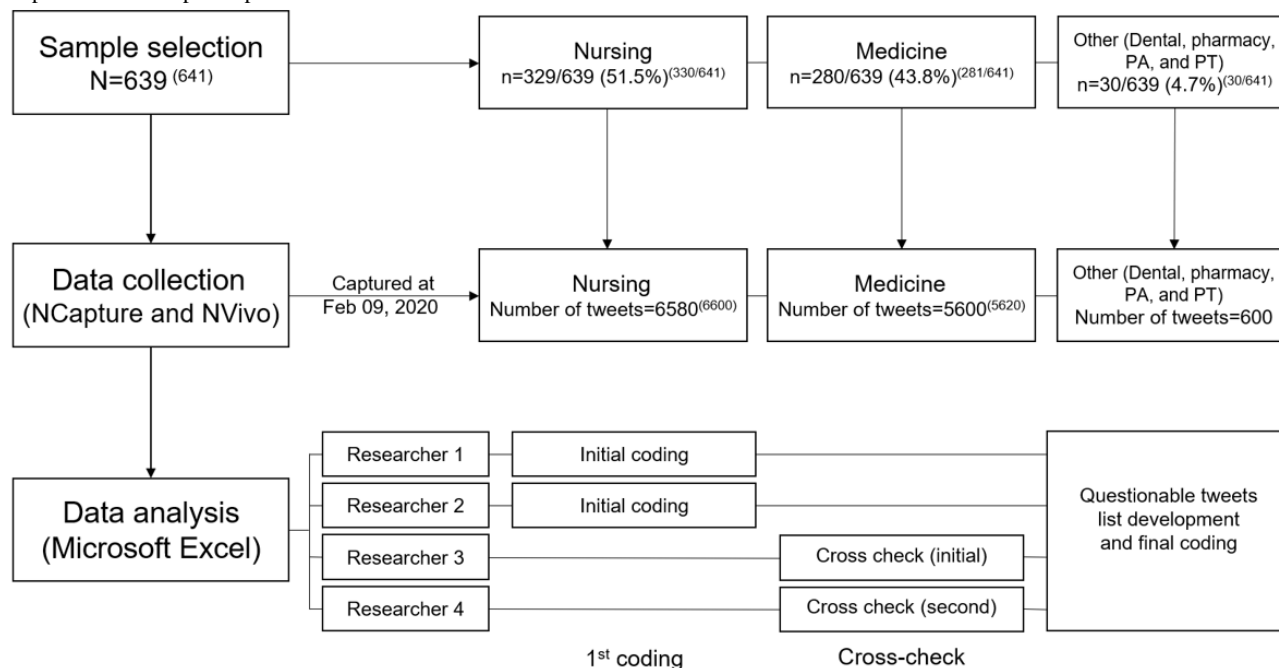
Data Collection

All tweets from 641 accounts were collected through NCapture [25], a free web browser extension tool that allows users to capture the content of web pages, Twitter, and Facebook to import into NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd). Owing to the uncontrollably large number of total tweets (n=3,415,798), each account's 20 most recent tweets were purposefully selected and analyzed (N=12,820).

The definition of tweets characterized by incivility (ie, "those written in [an] ill-mannered, disrespectful [way], or containing annoying, derogatory, disruptive, or aggressive remarks") and various types of a priori codes and their definitions were adopted from the study by De Gagne et al [19] on cyberincivility in Twitter accounts of nurses and nursing students (Table 1). Initially, 2 researchers (EC and HJ) independently examined all 12,820 tweets and identified instances of incivility based on the given definitions. Any unclear tweets were marked as *not sure*. After the initial coding, 2 coders (EC and HJ) had a team meeting and cross-checked the results. Then, a third and fourth coder (SSY and JCD) reviewed all tweets containing inappropriate or potentially objectionable content (cyberincivility) and the tweets marked as *not sure* and provided reasons for their views. When all 4 coders were familiar with the tweets, the team held a meeting to finalize the data set of tweets containing cyberincivility. When the research team identified tweets that fell into gray areas, they considered whether they would post such tweets themselves if they were health professions students and whether they would post them to their Twitter accounts while disclosing their identity; when team members determined that they would not, we categorized those tweets as instances of cyberincivility.

Table 1. Codebook used in the study.

Type of incivility	Definition
Profanity[a]	The use of abusive, vulgar, or irreverent words, images, symbols, or acronyms, including wtf, lmfao, or lmao
Product promotion[a]	The promotion to prospective buyers of commercial health or medical products unsupported by evidence through referral to promotional sites or dissemination of information about the product line, brand, or company
Sexually explicit or suggestive[a]	The depiction, description, or suggestion of nudity or sexual content to belittle, degrade, intimidate, humiliate, or harm
Demeaning to patients[a]	Remarks or attitudes toward patients, including body donors, that lack dignity and respect
Name-calling	The use of abusive names to belittle, degrade, intimidate, humiliate, or harm
Rude comments	Comments lacking the respect considered normal in society or conveying contempt with a design to offend, humiliate, or harm
Interprofessional aggression[a]	Expressions of direct/indirect, hostile/subtle, derogatory, or negative attitudes across the health professions
Alcohol and drugs[a]	Depictions of or remarks about health issues such as intoxication that denigrate, condemn, or humiliate a community or its members rather than contributing to safety or education
Violation of privacy and anonymity[b]	Remarks about or images of patients that reveal confidential information or that could be used to identify a patient
Bias and stereotyping references[b]	Prejudicial, discriminatory, or negative remarks or expressions about a culture or a person's racial, ethnic, religious, gender, or sexual orientation
Intraprofessional aggression[a]	Remarks or expressions of direct/indirect, hostile/subtle, derogatory, or negative attitudes within a given health profession community
Violence[a]	Graphic images or descriptions that glorify violence, suffering, or humiliation or encourage participation
Risky behaviors[a]	Content that encourages, glorifies, or celebrates reckless or unhealthy behaviors, such as speeding, unprotected sex, or hazing that carry a risk of negative results or could lead to loss or harm

[a]Revised definition from the study by De Gagne et al [19].

[b]Revised code from the study by De Gagne et al [19].

Data Analysis and Rigor

The quantitative data (n=639) were analyzed using SAS version 9.4 (SAS Institute Inc). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize user and account characteristics, including gender; country; type of health discipline; presence of profile images or user descriptions that could be perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable; and the number of total tweets, followers, and instances of cyberincivility. We calculated the univariate odds of the presence of cyberincivility for the user and the account characteristics mentioned above with logistic regression.

The qualitative content of tweets containing incivility was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. We performed consensus coding to classify each tweet that could be perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable [26]. While using the a priori codes in the findings by De Gagne et al [19], the coding team discussed whether we needed to expand or modify the definition of certain codes or add a new code that could emerge in this study. The team collaborated to create a final set of codes and definitions and consulted a professional editor who provided the team with constructive comments and revisions (Table 1). Then, the coding team independently coded the instances of cyberincivility, cross-checked them, and discussed any

discrepancies or disagreements arising among coders to ensure reliability [26]. To ensure the rigor of the qualitative data analysis, all coding team members held regular team meetings during the entire analysis process.

Results

Sample Characteristics and Instances of Cyberincivility

A total of 639 accounts were analyzed for quantitative analysis. Of the total 639 accounts, users included 280 (43.8%) medical students, 329 (51.5%) nursing students, and 30 (4.7%) others in 22 countries: 287 (44.9%) from the United States, 197 (30.8%) from the United Kingdom, 104 (16.3%) from unknown countries, and 51 (8.0%) from other 19 countries. The sample comprised primarily female users (489/639, 76.5%) along with 20.8% (133/639) male users and 2.7% (17/639) gender-unknown users. The mean number of followers for each account and the mean number of tweets were 2361.28 (SD 43,443.8) and 5343.50 (SD 10,168.8), respectively. Among the 639 users analyzed for quantitative analysis, 193 (30.20%) tweeted instances of cyberincivility at least once over the 5-week period and had 2.71 instances on average (SD 2.60), with a maximum of 18 and a median of 4. Of the 193 users, 61.66% (119), 32.64% (63), and 5.7% (11) were students in nursing, medicine, and other disciplines, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Sample characteristics of users (N=639).

Characteristics	Value
Discipline, n (%)	
Medicine	280 (43.8)
Nursing	329 (51.5)
Others	30 (4.7)
Gender, n (%)	
Female	489 (76.5)
Male	133 (20.8)
Unknown	17 (2.7)
Country, n (%)	
United States	287 (44.9)
United Kingdom	197 (30.8)
Others	51 (8.0)
Unknown	104 (16.3)
Number of followers	
Mean (SD)	2361.28 (43443.80)
Median	323.0
Number of tweets	
Mean (SD)	5343.50 (10168.81)
Median	1463.0
Instances of cyberincivility[a], n (%)	
Absence	446 (69.8)
Presence	193[a] (30.2)
Cyberincivility by disciplines (n=193)[a]; n (%)	
Medicine	63[a] (32.6)
Nursing	119 (61.7)
Others	11 (5.7)

[a]One medical student account was excluded from the quantitative analysis, as some information could not be verified because of account deletion.

The characteristics of accounts with instances of cyberincivility are presented in Table 3, with odds ratios (ORs). Findings from the logistic regression analysis revealed that gender-unknown users were more likely to exhibit instances of cyberincivility than female users (OR 4.9194, 95% CI 1.6086-15.8640). Twitter users with profile pictures that could be perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable were more likely to display instances of cyberincivility (OR 3.3484, 95% CI 1.2389-10.0217). Twitter users in nursing were more likely to exhibit instances of cyberincivility than users in medicine (OR 2.1100, 95% CI 1.3009-3.4504). Twitter users from the United States were more likely to display instances of cyberincivility than users from the United Kingdom (OR 3.2172, 95% CI 1.8678-5.6490). Twitter users with fewer followers were more likely to post tweets categorized as instances of cyberincivility (OR 0.5477, 95% CI 0.3033-0.9493). In addition, when they tweeted more often, they were more likely to post cyberincivility (OR 4.6938, 95% CI 3.2626-6.8807). When the number of tweets was equal to 100, if the number of tweets increased by 10%, the odds of the probability of instances of cyberincivility increased to 4.6938 (Table 3).

Table 3. Association of Twitter account characteristics with presence of cyberincivility through logistic regression fit.

Characteristics	Estimated coefficient	OR[a] (95% CI)	P value
Gender (reference: female)			
Male	0.02876	0.9716 (0.5572-1.6702)	.92
Unknown	1.59319	4.9194 (1.6086-15.8640)	.005
Picture profile (reference: appropriate)			
Inappropriate or potentially objectionable	1.20850	3.3484 (1.2389-10.0217)	.02
Discipline (reference: medicine)			
Nursing	0.74669	2.1100 (1.3009-3.4504)	.002
Others	0.40821	1.5041 (0.6000-3.6218)	.37
Country (reference: United Kingdom)			
United States	1.16851	3.2172 (1.8678-5.6490)	<.001
Other	0.87034	2.3877 (0.9871-5.6001)	.048
Unknown	1.15787	3.1831 (1.7089-5.9744)	<.001
Number of followers this account has	-0.60209	0.5477 (0.3033-0.9493)	.04
Number of tweets issued by the user	1.54624	4.6938 (3.2626-6.8807)	<.001

[a]OR: odds ratio.

Patterns of Cyberincivility

Over the 5-week period, 3.92% (502/12,820) tweets categorized as instances of cyberincivility were generated by 193 users, comprising 119 nursing (323/502, 64.3%), 64 medicine (155/502, 30.9%), and 10 other health professions students (24/502, 4.8%). Most tweets were collected from the United States (300/502, 59.8%), the United Kingdom (53/502, 10.6%), and Australia (12/502, 2.4%); in addition, 21.5% (108/502) of tweets were collected from unknown locations. A total of 5.8% (29/502) of tweets were collected from 8 other countries that did not have a considerable number of tweets (range 1-10). Of the 502 tweets identified as instances of cyberincivility, 15.5% (78/502) were related to the user's health profession or school life, and 84.5% (424/502) were related to their personal life. The major categories of the personal life domain were profanity (218/502, 43.4%), product promotion (53/502, 10.6%), and rude comments (42/502, 8.4%). Profanity (37/502, 7.4%) was the most frequent category in the school life domain. The tweets were original posts, responses to other users' posts, or posts quoted. The frequencies of each code in the personal life and school life domains are shown in Multimedia Appendix 1.

Personal tweets covered a wide range of topics, including entertainment, everyday thoughts and events, relationships, sports, product promotion, service evaluation, and politics. Inappropriate or potentially objectionable tweets in the school life domain were not as prevalent as those in the personal life domain. Tweets in the school life domain that could be perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable often expressed students' frustration or stress with their school (eg, coursework, assignments, grades, exams, and tuition) or aggressively referred to interactions in health care settings or during clinical practice. Some users expressed dissatisfaction with their school's financial aid office's expectations or described the stressful nature of the nursing school. A minor number of tweets in the school life domain contained aggressive criticism regarding community health issues or public health policies. One user tweeted about laws that pertained to miscarriage and self-inflicted abortion in what might be interpreted as an opinionated and offensive manner. In tweets categorized as the school life domain, a few users applied school-related hashtags (eg, #medstudenttwitter; #medstudents).

Of the 502 tweets identified as instances of cyberincivility, profanity (255/502, 50.8%) was found most frequently in both the personal life domain (218/502, 43.4%) and the school life domain (37/502, 7.4%). Although the context in which it was used varied, the profanity was generally pointed and direct (eg, expressing frustration with a patient interaction). In some cases, profanity was used to emphasize casual feelings and thoughts. For example, many students used "f**k," "bit**," "sh*t," or the acronym "Lmfao" ("Laughing my f***ing ass off"). Students expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with their elected leaders' decisions, yet few tweeted profanities at the politicians. Some users tweeted profanity about sports performances or shared and referenced music among other accounts that used profanity. One student tweeted that their progress in school was an "absolute sh*t show." Sometimes, users used some profanity but censored it with asterisks (ie, F**K). We found 5 accounts that contained profane gestures or words in their profile or header images. Furthermore, there were product promotion-related tweets (60/502, 12.0%) that advertised commercial products, places, websites, or accounts. One tweet referenced traveling around the city and promoted a code for free rides. Some students directly tagged a commercial Twitter account running a money-drawing event and asked for money to pay for their student loan. Some tweets often promoted free show or movie tickets or mobile apps, and a few students shared their customer codes for an extra discount for specific products.

Among 502 tweets coded as instances of cyberincivility, 7.4% (37/502) were of a sexually explicit or suggestive nature, which occurred most frequently in the personal life domain (35/37, 94.6%). In addition, 3.1% (20/639) of users' profile pictures or images were coded as potentially objectionable because of their sexually suggestive nature to readers or viewers. A few tweets were sexually explicit, including one user's naked selfies along with an invitation to their personal paid websites (eg, OnlyFans account). Another tweet searched for people with specific sexual fetishes. Most of the sexually explicit and suggestive tweets seemed to have a humorous yet sarcastic or cynical intent. Some tweets portrayed or described excessive alcohol drinking or drug abuse, violent or risky behaviors, or unlawful acts or displayed an image of a weapon. A few users tweeted about biased or stereotyped references to a specific gender, race/ethnicity, culture, or zodiac sign (eg, "Aquarius people are always so rude"). Name-calling (33/502, 6.6%) or tweets meant to belittle, degrade, or humiliate others often occurred between accounts as users argued and expressed disagreement (eg, "idiots") in response to tweets about current political events or as commentary; these tweets often included derogatory language and were mostly aggressive. For instance, one user referred to a political party in a dismissive manner, and one tweet contained name-calling that expressed opposition to a politician by referring to them as a "toddler" and "a disgrace." Children and older adults were the targets of 3 tweets that referred to them as disrespectful, stupid, and nasty. Furthermore, 1.4% (7/502) of tweets were coded as demeaning to patients, including tweets about drug seekers observed in the emergency department or tweets that used a mocking tone to describe patients (eg, "they look like the dead"). One user described how they had played with a cadaver's muscles in an anatomy laboratory.

A proportion of 1.6% of tweets identified as instances of cyberincivility (8/502) exhibited interprofessional (7/502, 1.4%) or intraprofessional (1/502, 0.2%) aggression. Some users tweeted within their own profession (ie, alluded to their work or school) using minor profanity (eg, "Lmao"). Tweets by medical students were dismissive of naturopathic medicine and nurse practitioners: they were mocked in one tweet, and in another tweet, they were deemed not to be a professional. We found 0.8% of those tweets (4/502) that violated privacy and anonymity by providing details of situations and dialogs concerning patients during clinical practice. Although these tweets did not include person-identifiable information, the descriptions provided were sufficiently detailed to allow possible identification by the patients or people involved. Multimedia Appendix 2 summarizes the examples of tweets from each code. All examples have been paraphrased to prevent backtracking and protect privacy while maintaining the original meaning.

Discussion

Principal Findings

The purpose of this study is to analyze Twitter content related to cyberincivility among health professions students. Our study sample consisted of a diverse group of students from 22 different countries. Unlike previous studies where a single discipline was

included [19,20,27-29], this study explored cyberincivility using a global and multidisciplinary approach.

In our study, 30.2% (193/639) of the sample population engaged in cyberincivility on Twitter at least once over a period of 5 weeks, with an average of 2.71 instances of cyberincivility per user, ranging from 1 to 18 during this period. Regarding a specific discipline, 36.2% (119/329) of nursing students, 22.5% (63/280) of medical students, and 36.7% (11/30) of other health professions students were involved in cyberincivility. In a previous study by De Gagne et al [19], 36.8% of nurses and nursing students posted tweets that could have been perceived as inappropriate or potentially objectionable, which is similar to the findings of this study. The prevalence of cyberincivility among medical students was consistent with a study conducted in the United States [30] in which 21% of medical students self-reported that they had posted profanity, a depiction of intoxication, or sexually suggestive materials on social media. Peer reporting of such content was significantly more frequent than self-reporting [30], which suggests that there may be differing perceptions and opinions of propriety pertaining to social media use. The boundaries of professionalism in cyberspace are likely to be an ongoing topic of discussion among health professionals.

Our study revealed several interesting areas for future research. Gender-unknown users were more likely to engage in cyberincivility compared with users who identified as male or female. A lack of information exists on the relationship between gender identity and cyberincivility; however, gender-unknown users may not be restricted by gender identity [31]. Another interesting finding was that Twitter users with a profile picture that could be perceived as inappropriate were more likely to post potentially objectionable tweets. It has been suggested that as a means of asserting self-presence, a profile picture may provide an emotional statement and a facial image [32]; this is another area that could benefit from further study. It has been noted that social media profiles of medical doctors significantly affect potential patients' impressions of those doctors' professionalism [33]; thus, it could be worthwhile to evaluate the potential benefits of profile pictures for building provider-patient relationships and maintaining meaningful connections with the public.

Our findings showed that users from the United Kingdom were more likely to post tweets deemed appropriate than users from the United States and other countries. There have been a few studies on cyberincivility that involved international comparisons. For example, a study of German and Japanese students' communication on mobile messaging indicated that German students tended to use a direct communication style compared with Japanese students [34]. In our previous study that examined differences in cybercivility among nursing students using cross-country comparisons, we discovered that students from Hong Kong reported lower knowledge of cybercivility compared with respondents from South Korea and the United States [35]. In a study by Kim et al [35], US nursing students reported a lower frequency of cyberincivility experiences compared with students from Hong Kong and South Korea. Although it is difficult to compare our results directly with those from previous studies, they provide further evidence

that cultural and societal differences may affect social media communications, thus supporting the development and implementation of proper web-based communication training from a global perspective.

Our findings revealed that Twitter users were more likely to issue potentially problematic content if they had fewer followers. These results may indicate that respondents with many followers may think more about the influence of their tweets and exercise more caution when they post messages. A small number of followers could indicate that followers are closely related to the owner of the account and are therefore not perceived as likely to be influenced or as having dissimilar opinions or social habits. We also noted that Twitter users were more likely to engage in cyberincivility if they posted tweets relatively often. These results are congruent with those of a previous study [19], showing that users who have used Twitter for a longer period may feel more comfortable with the technology and with expressing their opinions freely on even sensitive issues compared with those who have been Twitter users for a shorter period [36].

We found that the largest categories of cyberincivility were profanity and product promotion, which is consistent with the findings of a previous study [19]. Furthermore, we noticed several aggressive or biased comments toward other users, politicians, or specific groups of people. Profanity was reported to be the second most frequent unprofessional content in a study by Kitsis et al [30], which analyzed medical students' and faculty members' perceptions of unprofessional content posted on their social networking platforms. Our study showed that students often added minor profane abbreviations (eg, f**k and Lmao) to create an intimate and informal atmosphere to the content of their tweets; however, some students used profanities to show their aggression and offensive opinions toward other users, which could result in fostering similar hostility or rude behavior in their followers. According to negative behavioral contagion models, rudeness is like a cold, and this behavior can be easily activated in social networking and spread easily by any user [37]. In a study by Ryan et al [38] that examined public perspectives on digital professionalism in nursing, participants perceived profanities used generally or against individuals or groups as unacceptable and unprofessional. Such tweets have been reported as rude, disrespectful, and unprofessional in other studies of cybercivility by health professionals and students [19,39].

Although we found relatively few instances of cyberincivility in school-related tweets, their content is worth discussing. We found tweets that included demeaning comments toward specific patient groups or vulnerable populations, including children and older adults, or interprofessional or intraprofessional aggression, such as content that degraded other health professionals. For example, one medical student posted that patients should be treated by physicians rather than by advanced practice registered nurses. In a study by Kitsis et al [30], medical students and faculty perceived social media content as unprofessional if it contained derogatory remarks toward certain patient groups (ie, Medicaid patients) or negative comments about work stress, colleagues, and patients. Similarly, Kim et al [40] studied Korean clinical nurses' experiences of cyberincivility, including a lack of respect and morality within health professions. They suggested that interprofessional or intraprofessional aggression in online spaces could occur when health care professionals lacked an understanding of the roles of workers in other occupations or when users were tired from work and lost control of their emotions [40]. Researchers have also highlighted that experiences of interprofessional or intraprofessional aggression in cyberspace can increase the workload and stress of health professionals by generating mistrust and reducing teamwork [30,40]. The content of health professions students' tweets in our study reflects their perceptions, beliefs, and values, and it is possible that their communication with colleagues may indicate a lack of respect and understanding of other occupations. These findings reinforce the need to teach digital professionalism to cultivate respect from students for their peers, colleagues, and patients. The structure of social norms in digital professionalism is complex and evolves based on changing social and individual norms, values, attitudes, beliefs, and context [38]; therefore, instructional materials should include socially and culturally appropriate content and input by individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Although our data did not show many cases of cyberincivility related to privacy violation, several studies have reported social media content that could expose patients' personal information and invade their privacy [18]. Student disclosure of information about themselves and others (eg, patients or other health care providers) can lead to unexpected consequences. Ahmed et al [18] analyzed 754 tweets issued by doctors, nurses, and other professionals with a hashtag #ShareAStoryInOneTweet containing disclosures about others (eg, patients and colleagues). The content of those tweets included patients' age, name, specific time frames, clinical images, information about vulnerable groups of patients, and descriptions of direct patient care. Only 2 tweets (0.3%) included the patients' consent to share the story or information. The authors reported that a considerable number of the tweets are likely to be identifiable by patients or their acquaintances. Their study indicates that sharing clinical stories on the web, including fragmented information, is highly problematic as it can lead to recognition and identification [18] and that health professions students have a clear need for guidelines for safe and professional use of social networking sites [41].

The ubiquitous nature and advanced algorithms of social media allow fast and easy connection with others [42], but this characteristic can blur the line between health professionals (including students) and the public as well as between health care providers' private and professional lives [42-45]. There is a growing concern about the line between health care providers' privacy and professionalism. Users' personal information can be easily found through various sources in social networking platforms, including their profile images, everyday narratives, photos taken at work or home, and accounts that they follow or interest groups to which they belong [21,46,47]. Digital footprints, traces that users leave behind on the internet, are archived and can be rediscovered through a simple search [18]. For example, the recent *medbikini* controversy has provoked heated discussion of the standards of digital professionalism

after authors of a now-retracted article published in the *Journal of Vascular Surgery* [48] created fake accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to analyze the personal posts of graduating vascular surgery trainees for *potentially unprofessional* content, such as pictures of users wearing bikinis or drinking alcohol while off duty.

Researchers, educators, and regulators in health professions have been concerned that posts on the web that are perceived as unprofessional could potentially cost public trust and the professional image of health professions [21,47]. Several studies have recommended that health professionals keep their presence on the web safe and secure by separating professional and private accounts or by using the privacy options of their social media accounts [38,47,49]. Kouri et al [49] argued that health professionals cannot be *general users* of social networking platforms because their identity makes any information or content they post appear reliable and trustworthy, an argument disputed by the professional backlash to the retracted *medbikini* article [48]. Health professions are organized around specialized knowledge in addition to an ethos of duty and service. Historically, these professions have secured autonomy and prominence in the society by adopting codes of ethics and, ultimately, codes of behavior [50]. As social media will most likely continue to provide an important forum for health professions education and social discourse, the growing diversity of thoughts and perspectives about social responsibility and professional ethics should inform cybercivility training for all health professions students.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, our study was retrospective and observational and included a sample of accounts during the study period. We analyzed only 20 most recent tweets from each account, which may have skewed the findings. As a logistical challenge, Twitter users frequently change their accounts (eg, lock, ban, delete, or change user IDs) or delete their tweets, so several potential user accounts and tweets were excluded during the data collection phases. We were also solely dependent on the users' self-reported identification on their user descriptions. If they profiled themselves as health professions students and yet did not appear to be students, our ability to validate their student status was limited. Another possibility of sampling bias relates to our sample primarily consisting of nursing and medical students, with less than 5% of other health professions students (ie, dentistry, pharmacy, physical assistant, and physical therapy) being included. Future studies may explore ways to capture more diverse health professions students.

Second, our study was constrained by time limitations. The content of tweets may vary according to the time frame of the postings. In our case, we completed data collection in February 2020 when the global COVID-19 pandemic was not yet widespread, the Black Lives Matter social justice movement in the United States that followed the death of George Floyd had not commenced, and the August 2020 publication that inspired the *medbikini* issue in the medical profession had not occurred. As social networks respond rapidly to sociocultural and political contexts, these global events and social arguments might have

had a significant impact on our results had the data been collected several months later.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we are not exempt from researchers' confirmation bias and cultural bias. Cyberincivility is an emotionally charged social issue that can lead researchers to make interpretations or seek evidence to confirm or support their preconceptions. To minimize such biases, we implemented multiple team meetings during the course of the study, as we identified and analyzed instances of cyberincivility and engaged in open discussions as to why those tweets were potentially problematic. This process was both difficult and beneficial because our team members were of diverse backgrounds and generations, and professional standards are affected by individual experience, culture, generation, life history, and social ambiance. Although it was challenging to measure interrater reliability, the rigor of the study was maintained through deep and insightful team discussions, immersion in data, and a dedicated commitment to limit conflicts arising from cultural or implicit biases [51].

Future Implications

Work environments that practice professional behavior are safer, more productive, and healthier [52]. Unprofessional behavior has been linked to burnout, absenteeism [53,54], communication breakdowns, increased errors, and decreased performance [54,55]. However, there is still no universal definition of professional behavior. The onset of social media in the last 10 years or more has made it difficult to expand the narrower frameworks of historic codes of ethics [22]. Most major health care professional organizations have published guidelines for the use of social media, and many schools of higher education have them in place as well.

Definitions and rules of professionalism are changeable and have served many functions over time [50]. The relationship between professionals and the public is tenuous, complex, and ever changing; therefore, policies regarding professional codes of behavior, social contracts, and free speech are continuously negotiated. The current and past court cases illustrate the importance of an institution's ability to define inappropriate off-campus speech. For example, in Keefe vs Adams, the eighth US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a nursing student could be expelled for Facebook posts that showed a lack of professionalism [56]. To prevent risks to students and institutions, educators should provide comprehensive and practical guidelines using effective and creative methods (eg, vignettes or simulations) [57,58]. Academic institutions should provide clear policies for students' social media activities and a safe forum in which all members of the community can constructively discuss controversial issues.

Conclusions

Cyberincivility is a complex social phenomenon that has an important influence on health professions education. Using the Twitter data mining approach, we analyzed the nature of incivility among health professions students to better understand this concept. Our study supports the existing evidence that cyberincivility is still observed on social media. Twitter is likely to remain a ubiquitous, simple, and convenient tool for

communication and education; however, the benefits of using Twitter in health professions education can be maximized only within a culture dedicated to maintaining safe and healthy online communities. Our study shows that there is a continued need to provide students with guidance and training about their online persona and digital professionalism. Our findings have implications for designing evidence-based, intentional, and multidisciplinary cybercivility education rooted in social courtesy, professional ethics, and profound respect for others.

Acknowledgments

Authors' Contributions

JCD and EC designed the study and drafted the introduction. EC and HJ collected, screened, and cleaned the Twitter data set. JCD and EC drafted the context of the study and data collection sections. JCD and SSY developed a priori codes and their definitions. DJ analyzed the quantitative data. EC, HJ, SSY, and JCD analyzed the qualitative data iteratively. Data analysis and the results were drafted by DJ, EC, and JDN, and JCD, EC, DJ, and SSY interpreted the results and drafted the discussions. All the authors drafted the conclusions. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

Multimedia Appendix 1
Paraphrased examples of tweets.
[PDF File (Adobe PDF File), 176 KB - mededu_v7i2e28805_app1.pdf]

Multimedia Appendix 2
Frequencies of each code in the personal and school life domains (n=502).
[PDF File (Adobe PDF File), 289 KB - mededu_v7i2e28805_app2.pdf]

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Abbreviations

OR: odds ratio

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<u>Original Paper</u>

Remote Teaching in a Preclinical Phantom Course in Operative Dentistry During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Observational Case Study

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Abstract

Background: During the acute COVID-19 pandemic, physical access to the University Medical Center Göttingen was restricted for students. For the first time at our dental school, theoretical knowledge was imparted to students via asynchronous online screencasts and discussed via synchronous video meetings only.

Objective: We aimed to assess the acceptance and effectiveness of distance education as a new teaching format for theoretical knowledge within the preclinical course in Operative Dentistry (sixth semester of the undergraduate dental curriculum in Germany).

Methods: The phantom course comprised distance education (first phase, 11 weeks) and subsequent on-site practical demonstrations and training (second phase, 10 weeks). All theoretical knowledge was taught via online screencasts during distance education (except for the first week, 3 screencasts were uploaded per week resulting in a total of 30 screencasts). Until the end of the term, all students (N=33) were able to view the screencasts for an unlimited number of times. Theoretical knowledge was assessed in a summative examination after practical on-site teaching. Acceptance and effectiveness of the new curriculum and distance education were also measured based on an evaluation survey and students' self-perceived learning outcome, which was compared to the outcome from the two pre–COVID-19 terms.

Results: Each screencast was viewed by a mean of 24 (SD 3.3) students and accessed a mean of 5.6 (SD 1.2) times per user (ie, by students who accessed the respective screencast at least once). During distance education, the number of accesses showed a linear trend over time. During the practical training phase, screencast views declined and increased again prior to the examination. Screencasts covering topics in Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry were viewed by more students than screencasts covering topics in Endodontology or Periodontology (both $P=.047$). Examination items in Periodontology showed inferior results compared to the other topics ($P<.001$). Within the different topics, students' self-perceived learning outcome did not differ from that during the pre–COVID-19 terms. Although most students agreed that the presented screencasts contributed to their learning outcome, pre–COVID-19 term students more strongly felt that lectures significantly contributed to their learning outcome ($P=.03$).

Conclusions: Screencasts showed high acceptance and effectiveness among the students but were not used as a learning tool by all students. However, students who viewed the screencasts accessed each screencast more frequently than they could have attended a conventional lecture. Screencast views were mostly due to intrinsic motivation.

(JMIR Med Educ 2021;7(2):e25506) doi:10.2196/25506

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Introduction

In many disciplines, including medical education, virtual learning objects (eg, video podcasts, screencasts) are frequently and successfully used to facilitate knowledge acquisition [1,2]. As opposed to medical education, education of undergraduate dental students includes both teaching of theoretical knowledge and training of physical skills. Traditionally, during the preclinical semesters, theoretical knowledge is taught in lectures utilizing a large-group setup (ie, synchronous learning) and physical skills training is provided on-site by using dental simulators or phantom heads. The need for physical skills training renders conventional distance education (DE) within undergraduate dental education difficult. As a consequence, videoconferencing and streamed video lectures were only used by a minority of undergraduate dental schools in the past [3]. However, significant advancements in technology (eg, internet bandwidth, video conferencing hardware) have occurred in recent years. Based on a recent systematic review, the use of virtual learning objects and DE in dentistry has only been assessed in a small number of studies [4]. Most studies focusing on teaching preclinical and clinical dentistry used either virtual learning objects designed for single learning objectives [5-8], video demonstrations of practical procedures, or static PowerPoint presentations [9-11]. However, DE utilizing screen-captured lectures and video demonstrations was only reported in a single course in Prosthodontics [12]. Within the evaluation survey of this promising approach, students rated screen-captured lectures as highly useful for their self-perceived learning outcome.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, medical education required several adaptations and DE was frequently utilized [13-15]. Physical distancing measures prohibited on-site teaching activities. Moreover, dental students around the world were often unable to physically access their dental schools and dental simulators or phantom heads during the acute phase of the pandemic [16-18]. As a result, new and innovative teaching concepts, especially those focusing on theoretical knowledge, within the field of DE in dentistry rapidly emerged [19-24]. Although these teaching innovations seem promising, detailed data regarding students' acceptance and effectiveness are often missing.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators at the University Medical Center Göttingen also faced a number of challenges, as physical access to the dental school was restricted for students and on-site teaching activities were suspended. Therefore, a new curriculum featuring both DE (theoretical knowledge) and postponed on-site education (physical skills) was developed. Lectures were recorded as screencasts and distributed as online asynchronous material. For the first time, theoretical knowledge was imparted to students by using asynchronous screencasts and discussed via synchronous video meetings only. Both educators and students had no prior experience with DE. Students' acceptance and effectiveness of DE was also unknown.

Therefore, we aimed to retrospectively analyze the acceptance and effectiveness of screencasts as a new teaching format within the preclinical phantom course in Operative Dentistry (within the sixth semester of the undergraduate dental curriculum in Germany). Further objectives of the study were to assess the use of screencasts over time, link usage data with the results of the final summative examination, and assess students' self-perceived learning outcome and compare the results to those from the two previous pre–COVID-19 terms.

Methods

Study Design and Participants

During the summer-term of 2020, asynchronous screencasts and synchronous video meetings were used as means of teaching theoretical knowledge within the preclinical phantom course in Operative Dentistry at the University Medical Center Göttingen. No study-related interventions were performed. Owing to the retrospective and anonymous design of this report, no formal approval was required as stated by the ethics committee of the University Medical Center Göttingen (no. 25/12/20).

A total of 33 students were enrolled in the phantom course. Due to restricted physical access to the dental school, the course started with a phase of DE (first 11 weeks). Subsequently, on-site practical demonstrations and training of physical skills were possible (10 weeks). Thus, the summer-term 2020 was extended from 14 weeks (regular length) to 21 weeks.

DE: Theoretical Knowledge

All theoretical knowledge was taught via asynchronous screencasts (ie, screen-captured PowerPoint presentations with narrated audio). Starting from the second week, three screencasts were uploaded weekly, resulting in a total of 30 screencasts (Table 1). Screencasts covered three different topics: Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry; Endodontology; and Periodontology. Of note, the provided screencasts did not equally cover the topics. The number of screencasts per topic differed according to the relative importance of that topic and equaled the number of lectures from the pre–COVID-19 terms. Screencasts were made available to students via Stud.IP, an open-source learning management system [25], by using a MediaCast plugin (Figure 1). Anonymous data on students' accesses to the screencasts were recorded in log files of the learning management system. Until the end of the term, students were able to view the screencasts on-demand and off-campus for an unlimited number of times. Additionally, PowerPoint presentations were available for download in PDF.

Furthermore, live and interactive video meetings (ie, Zoom videoconferencing) were offered weekly (every Thursday at 3 PM) to discuss the topics covered within the screencasts (ie, synchronous learning). Students were also able to contact their lecturers via chat (Stud.IP Blubber plugin) or forum (Stud.IP). Neither viewing of screencasts nor participation within the video meetings was mandatory.

At the end of the term, anonymous usage data were extracted from the log files to evaluate students' accesses to the screencasts and their participation in video meetings.

Table 1. Characteristics of screencasts uploaded for each topic.

Characteristic	All topics	Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry	Endodontology	Periodontology	*P* value
Total, n (%) (N=29)[a]	29 (100)	16 (55)	9 (31)	4 (14)	N/A[b]
Duration (minutes), mean (SD)	22.9 (7.7)	18.9 (7.7)[c]	27.1 (6.0)[c]	29.8 (8.3)[c]	.02
Students who viewed screencasts, mean (SD)	24.0 (3.3)	25.5 (3.1)[c]	22.2 (2.8)[d]	21.8 (1.7)[d]	.01
Screencast accesses per user[e], mean (SD)	5.6 (1.2)	5.6 (1.2)[c]	5.5 (1.1)[c]	5.7 (1.3)[c]	.98

[a]One mandatory screencast containing safety instructions only is not included in the presented data.

[b]N/A: not applicable.

[c,d]Different lowercase letters in a row indicate significant difference between topics after multiple-comparison posthoc correction.

[e]Students who accessed a screencast at least once were regarded as a "user" of the respective screencast.

Figure 1. Web-based learning management system with access to screencasts. The upper panel shows the library of screencasts within the online course. Each screencast was made available via a MediaCast plugin and could be viewed using a browser-embedded media player (lower panel) or mobile devices.

On-site Training of Physical Skills

In the second phase of the term, physical skills were taught on-site by using phantom heads with natural tooth models (AG-3 Frasaco) and extracted teeth embedded in resin. During this phase, physical presence of students and educators was mandatory. The students were divided into two groups to allow for sufficient physical distancing between them. Teaching hours were from 8 AM to 12:15 PM or from 12:45 PM to 5 PM on each workday (Monday through Friday). To be admitted to the final examination, students had to perform a predefined number of treatments (ie, placement of direct composite restorations and root canal treatments) with sufficient quality. Students' work was continuously assessed by educators (experienced dentists from the Department of Preventive Dentistry, Periodontology and Cariology) present during the on-site physical skills training. For each step, students received immediate feedback.

Electronic Examination of Theoretical Knowledge

At the end of the course, a summative electronic examination using the CAMPUS examination software (Umbrella Consortium for Assessment Networks [26]) was set. The examination consisted of 30 equally weighted items (Table 2). Single-choice items with five answer options (Type-A), multiple-select items with five or six statements (Multiple-True-False), and open-ended items were used. Single-choice and open-ended items were scored dichotomously (0 or 1 credit point per item). Multiple-True-False items were scored according to the method described by Vorkauf [27]: if all statements were marked correctly as either true or false, examinees received full credit (1 credit point). If only one statement was marked incorrectly, examinees received half-credit (0.5 credit point). Otherwise, examinees received no credit (0 credit points) [28]. A fixed pass-mark of 60% (ie, 18 credit points) was used. Again, the number of items was not equally distributed across the three topics and resembled the distribution of screencasts per topic.

Table 2. Characteristics of multiple-choice examination items and credit awarded to examinees for each topic.

Characteristic	All topics	Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry	Endodontology	Periodontology
Items, n (%)	30 (100)	18 (60)	8 (27)	4 (13)
Single-choice	2 (7)	1 (50)	0 (0)	1 (50)
Multiple-select	27 (90)	16 (59)	8 (30)	3 (11)
Open-ended	1 (3)	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Received credit (%), mean (SD)	74.5 (34.6)	75.8 (34.5)[a]	79.2 (31.2)[a]	58.9 (37.2)[b]

[a,b]Different lowercase letters in a row indicate significant difference between topics after multiple-comparison posthoc correction.

Students' Self-Assessment of Learning Outcome

Immediately after the electronic examination, a standardized evaluation survey was electronically administered to all students using the EvaSys software (version 8.0; evasys). The questionnaire comprised a number of closed items and utilized a 6-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1="totally agree," 2="agree," 3="mostly agree," 4="mostly disagree," 5="disagree," and 6="totally disagree." Although the focus was primarily on organizational aspects, some items assessed students' self-perceived learning outcome (ie, "I estimate my learning outcome in Preventive Dentistry/Restorative Dentistry/Endodontology/Periodontology as high" and "The lectures/practical training/practical demonstrations in this course significantly contributed to my learning outcome"). Students were able to provide additional information and further suggestions in a final open-ended question. For analysis of the open-ended responses, a qualitative content analysis with inductive categories regarding aspects related to DE was performed.

Statistical Analysis

All data were first reported descriptively as absolute numbers (categorial variables) or using mean and SD values (continuous variables). Subsequently, usage data and examination results were compared between the three topics (Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry; Endodontology; and Periodontology) by using Kruskal-Wallis rank sum tests followed by Dunn posthoc tests. In addition, students' self-perceived learning outcome was compared to evaluation surveys from two previous terms involving conventional lectures instead of screencasts by using Kruskal-Wallis rank sum tests followed by Dunn posthoc tests.

All statistical evaluations were performed using R software (version 4.0.3; The R Foundation for Statistical Computing) and the packages "PMCMR" (version 4.3) and "irr" (version 0.84.1). The level of significance was set at $P<.05$. Multiple-comparison posthoc correction was performed using Hochberg method.

Results

DE: Theoretical Knowledge

Theoretical knowledge was taught by using a total of 29 screencasts, with a mean length of 22.9 (SD 7.7) minutes. Each screencast was viewed by a mean of 24 (SD 3.3) students (range: 17-29 students). Users (ie, students who accessed the respective screencast at least once) accessed each screencast a mean of 5.6 (SD 1.2) times. Detailed results for each topic are presented in Table 1. Screencasts in Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry were viewed by more students (mean 25.5, SD 3.1) than screencasts in Endodontology (mean 22.2, SD 2.8) or Periodontology (mean 21.8, SD 1.7; both $P=.047$). The

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average number of screencast accesses per user did not differ between the topics (Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry: mean 5.6, SD 1.2; Endodontology: mean 5.5, SD 1.1; Periodontology: mean 5.7, SD 1.3; *P*=.98).

During the phase of DE, the number of screencast accesses showed a linear trend over time. The number of screencast views also declined during the subsequent practical training but increased again prior to the final examination (Figure 2). Mostly,

screencasts were accessed in the morning and afternoon hours. Screencasts were also viewed in the evening hours. Around noon, fewer numbers of accesses were observed (Figure 3).

The mean number of students who participated at the live and interactive video meetings was 21.2 (SD 6.7). Weekly video meetings were held to answer students' questions and discuss the content of screencasts (duration: mean 13.1, SD 6.3 minutes).

Figure 2. Number of screencasts views over time. Time spans of distance education (theoretical knowledge) and on-site education of physical skills are marked by different colors. All screencasts were uploaded during the distance-education phase. The final examination and evaluation were set after the on-site education phase. MC: multiple-choice.
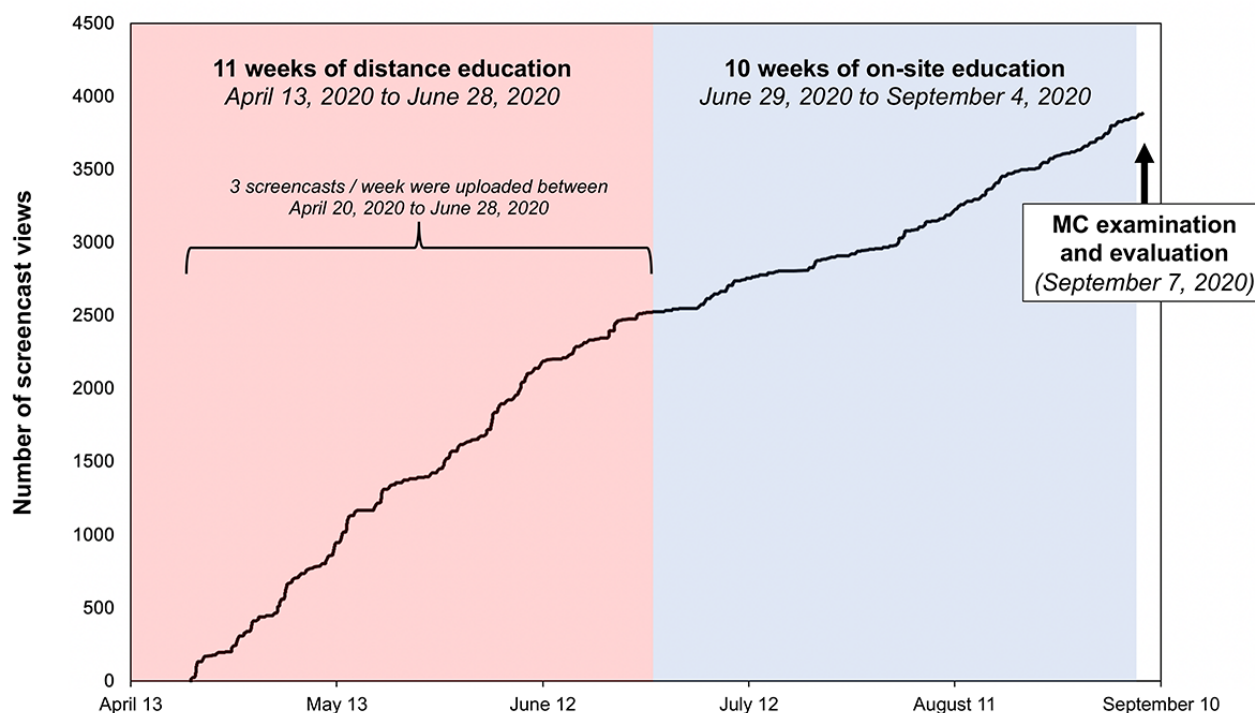
Figure 3. Histograms showing the distribution of screencast access times over the course of the day. The upper panel shows the access times during the distance education phase. The lower panel shows access times during the on-site phase of physical skills training. During on-site teaching, physical presence at the dental school was mandatory on weekdays (either between 8 AM to 12:15 PM or between 12:45 PM to 5 PM).
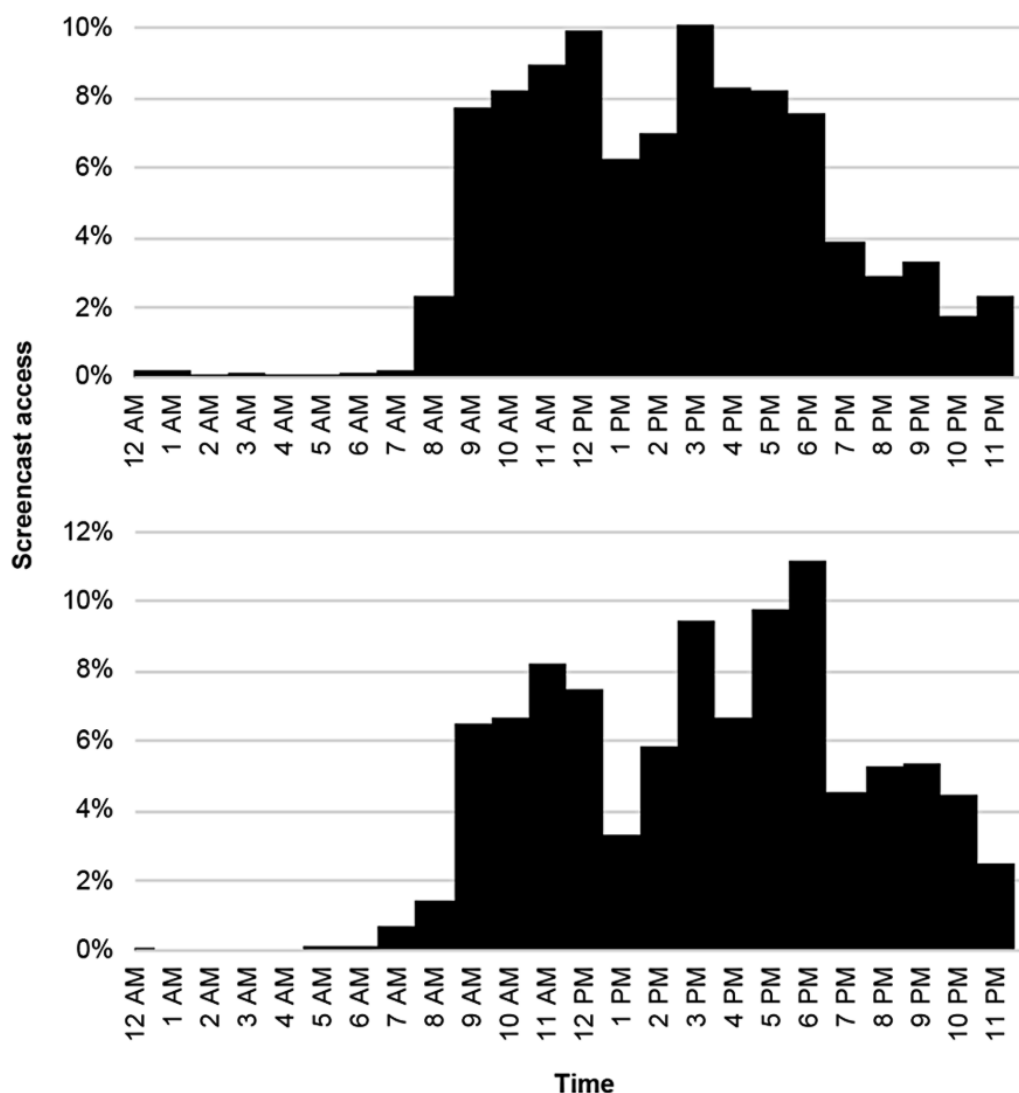
Electronic Examination of Theoretical Knowledge

Only 31 students met the course requirements during physical skills training and were eligible for taking the final examination. Overall examination difficulty (ie, the mean score per item in the given situation) amounted to 0.74. Items in Periodontology showed inferior results compared to the other topics (58.9% vs 75.8% for Cariology, Restorative Dentistry, and Preventive Dentistry and 58.9% vs 79.2% for Endodontology; both $P<.001$).

Students' Self-Assessment of Learning Outcome

Students' self-perceived learning outcome within the assessed topics did not differ from the evaluations performed during the pre–COVID-19 terms (Restorative Dentistry: $P\geq.21$, Preventive Dentistry: $P=.84$, Endodontology: $P\geq.48$, and Periodontology: $P=.36$; Table 3). Regarding DE, most students agreed that the presented screencasts significantly contributed to their learning

outcome (median score: 2="agree"). However, students from the pre–COVID-19 terms rated more strongly that lectures significantly contributed to their learning outcome within the preclinical course in Operative Dentistry ($P=.03$). Evaluation of practical training during on-site teaching did not significantly differ from that during the pre–COVID-19 terms ($P\geq.69$). The contribution of practical demonstrations showed comparable results to the previous phantom course during the pre–COVID-19 winter-term 2019/20 ($P=.27$) but was judged as less supportive than that during the summer-term 2019 ($P=.03$).

In response to the final open-ended question, some students gave additional insights regarding their perception of DE: students criticized the screencasts as being superficial (n=4), shorter than conventional lectures (n=2), and an inappropriate learning tool for the final examination (n=2). Some students (n=2) also criticized the need for additional self-study.

Table 3. Students' self-assessment of learning outcome during summer-term 2020 and the pre–COVID-19 terms.

Survey item[a]	Summer-term 2020 (n=31, response rate: 94%)	Winter-term 2019/20 (pre–COVID-19) (n=33, response rate: 97%)	Summer-term 2019 (pre–COVID-19) (n=29, response rate: 78%)
	Median (IQR; range)	Median (IQR; range)	Median (IQR; range)
"I estimate my learning outcome in Preventive Dentistry as high."	2 (1-2; 1-4)[b]	2 (1.25-2; 1-4)[b]	2 (1-2; 1-4)[b]
"I estimate my learning outcome in Restorative Dentistry as high."	2 (1-2; 1-3)[b]	2 (1-2; 1-4)[b]	1 (1-2; 1-3)[b]
"I estimate my learning outcome in Endodontology as high."	1 (1-2; 1-3)[b]	1 (1-2; 1-3)[b]	1 (1-2; 1-3)[b]
"I estimate my learning outcome in Periodontology as high."	3.5 (3-4; 1-6)[b]	3 (2.25-3.75; 1-6)[b]	3 (2-4; 1-6)[b]
"Lectures significantly contributed to my learning outcome."	2 (2-3; 1-5)[b]	2 (2-2; 1-4)[c]	2 (1-2.25; 1-5)[c]
"Practical training significantly contributed to my learning outcome."	2 (1-2; 1-4)[b]	2 (1-2; 1-3)[b]	2 (1-2; 1-3)[b]
"Practical demonstrations significantly contributed to my learning outcome."	2 (2-3; 1-3)[b]	2 (1-3; 1-5)[b,c]	1.5 (1-2; 1-3)[c]

[a]Students' responses on a 6-point Likert scale with the following response options: 1="totally agree," 2="agree," 3="mostly agree," 4="mostly disagree," 5="disagree," and 6="totally disagree."

[b,c]For each item, different lowercase letters in a row indicate significant difference between the terms after multiple-comparison posthoc correction.

Discussion

Principal Findings

This study reports the experience of a German dental school with DE in a preclinical phantom course in Operative Dentistry. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current curriculum had to be adapted. As further development of the pandemic was unknown, a high degree of planning uncertainty was present throughout the term. During the initial phase, feasibility of the new curriculum was still unknown. Moreover, both educators and students were not used to DE, and students' acceptance of screencasts as a new teaching format was unknown.

Acceptance of DE

Students' attention in conventional lectures is known to start decreasing after only 10 minutes [29]. Regarding videos in massive open online courses, video lengths of varying durations between 6 and 20 minutes are recommended in the literature [30]. Therefore, produced screencasts were kept shorter (duration: mean 22.9, SD 7.7 minutes) than conventional lectures from the pre–COVID-19 terms (duration: 45 minutes). In addition, screencasts included references to selected articles and book chapters for further reading. Students were encouraged to review the presented topics during self-study. Weekly live and interactive video meetings were offered to discuss any questions. The number of students participating in the video meetings was slightly lower than the number of screencast users (mean 21.1, SD 6.7 vs 24.0, SD 3.3).

The term could be performed as initially planned. At the end, data on screencast usage over time were assessed and linked to examination results. Screencasts were not used by all students as a learning tool. Up to 4 students refrained from viewing at least a single screencast. However, students using the screencasts accessed each screencast more frequently than they could have

visited a conventional lecture. Screencast viewing was mostly due to intrinsic motivation as screencast accesses showed a linear trend already at the beginning of the term. However, the final examination triggered an extrinsic increase in screencast accesses immediately prior to the examination date. This increase prior to the examination is in accordance with the observed access patterns in a growth and development curriculum: web-based learning modules were more frequently accessed by dental students as course examinations approached [31].

Interestingly, most screencasts were accessed during the daytime and evening hours, indicating that students seem to have maintained their daily routine during DE without any mandatory courses, as only an absolute minority of screencasts views were noted after midnight. In addition, access rates dropped around 1 PM, suggesting students took a lunch break around noontime. The pattern of access times only slightly shifted between both phases: during on-site teaching, screencasts were more frequently accessed in the evening hours. As always, only half of the cohort was present in the dental school for on-site teaching, and the other half was able to access the screencasts also in the morning or afternoon hours.

Effectiveness of DE

This study reports on the effectiveness of DE in an undergraduate dental curriculum. Students' acceptance and the effectiveness of DE were assessed based on the number of screencast views, students' summative examination results, and students' self-perceived learning outcome.

As physical attendance of lectures was not mandatory during the pre–COVID-19 terms, no comparison between the number of users and students attending conventional lectures was possible. Results of the final examination are comparable to those from the pre–COVID-19: within the phantom course,

examination difficulty ranged between 0.64 and 0.82 over the past terms. However, this comparison should be interpreted with caution as examination items differed.

Some students criticized that the presented screencasts were very superficial and/or very short. However, screencasts were intentionally kept shorter than conventional lectures in the pre–COVID-19 terms for didactic reasons. Although the students' self-perceived learning outcome did not differ from the past terms and most students agreed that the presented screencasts significantly contributed to their learning outcome, pre–COVID-19 term students rated more strongly that lectures significantly contributed to their learning outcome. Again, this comparison with students of the previous terms should be interpreted with caution, as evaluations were performed at different time points. For instance, although the evaluations of previous terms were performed near the end of the practical training, the current evaluation was performed immediately after the final examination. Therefore, the examination might have affected the students' judgement, leading to biased evaluation results.

Overall, the acceptance of DE can be regarded as high, and most students agreed that screencasts significantly contributed to their learning outcome. The presented data show the promising use of DE in an undergraduate dental curriculum. Our results are in line with those of a previous study that found that screen-captured lectures and video demonstrations were rated as highly useful by students regarding their self-perceived learning outcome in a course in Prosthodontics [12].

Limitations

The major limitation of this study is the anonymous data structure used. Therefore, no demographic data or other student-related factors concerning the use of the screencasts were available. In addition, no correlation of screencast viewing, examination results, or evaluation survey responses was possible at the individual student level. No data regarding the technical devices used and how students accessed the screencasts were available. Therefore, potential restrictions (eg, no device or internet access, not enough time to view screencasts) preventing some students from accessing the screencasts could not be identified. Moreover, the possibility that screencasts were jointly viewed by multiple students per access cannot be excluded.

A standardized questionnaire was used for the final evaluation survey. The evaluation survey was not modified according to the COVID-19 situation and the modified curriculum in effect (ie, DE and extended term duration). More detailed results could have been obtained by using a more differentiated questionnaire.

Further research regarding DE within the field of dentistry is required. These studies should allow for a direct comparison between screencast usage and examination results at the individual student level, assess students' self-estimated learning outcome using more detailed questionnaire tools, and include a control group.

Conclusions

Within the abovementioned limitations of the study, the results show that DE using online screencasts is a viable way of imparting theoretical knowledge in undergraduate dentistry programs. Screencast usage seems to be linked to examination results, and screencasts should be made available to students in addition to conventional lectures when the regular curriculum can be resumed. As suggested by some students, the length and content of screencasts could also be extended.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

DE: distance education

<u>Letter to the Editor</u>

Virtual vs Online: Insight From Medical Students. Comment on "Effectiveness of Virtual Medical Teaching During the COVID-19 Crisis: Systematic Review"

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We read with great interest the review by Wilcha [1], which discussed current literature on the effectiveness of virtual medical teaching during COVID-19. The conclusion suggested that despite various disadvantages, virtual teaching effectively enabled medical education to continue during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As fifth-year medical students currently studying at University College London, we have first-hand experience in virtual teaching and recognize its importance within medical education in the future.

We commend Wilcha for undertaking a systematic review in a newly emerging area of medical education. Virtual teaching appears likely to remain a part of medical education going forward; therefore, we welcome any attempts to review existing research to outline advantages, disadvantages, and recommendations. As acknowledged by Wilcha, researching an emerging area means the literature available is restricted. However, we would like to question the literature search conducted. Wilcha used the key term "virtual," when searching PubMed and Google Scholar, but we believe this limited the search. The search could have been expanded by using "online," a term synonymous with "virtual." We repeated the original search, replacing the term "virtual" with "online." This yielded 108 articles on PubMed compared to the 92 as originally reported. We then put these articles through the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in the *Methods* section of the review.

This left us with 7 articles, all of which were published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, relevant to the objectives of the study, and conducted between February and June 2020.

Some of these missed articles raise interesting points. For example, Wilcha discusses how technological difficulties are a major disadvantage of virtual teaching. However, Nik-Ahmad-Ziki et al [2] raise excellent points regarding this topic that were not discussed in the review. They outline the psychological impact technological difficulties can have on students, leaving them discouraged from joining sessions and demotivated. Interestingly, technological difficulties were rare for clinical teachers, who still had to go to the hospital during the day and so had access to excellent facilities and internet coverage.

Research on virtual teaching has become very important due to the recent changes enforced by the COVD-19 pandemic. We commend Wilcha for conducting this systematic review, but we believe the initial literature search was too limited. Adjusting the search terms would have provided more literature to review and more points to discuss. Furthermore, it would have helped address certain limitations. Many of the studies discussed by Wilcha had small sample sizes, which decreases the reliability of the findings. Had "online" been used as a key term, the study by Singh et al [3] would have been included. This study had a

large sample size of 208 students and presented interesting findings as many students thought physical classes were better than virtual classes. Going forward, repeating this systematic review would be useful as a considerable amount of research has occurred on this topic since this review was originally conducted.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Letter to the Editor

Author's Reply to: Virtual vs Online: Insight From Medical Students. Comment on "Effectiveness of Virtual Medical Teaching During the COVID-19 Crisis: Systematic Review"

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Related Articles:

Comment on: https://mededu.jmir.org/2021/2/e27020/

Comment on: https://mededu.jmir.org/2020/2/e20963/

KEYWORDS

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the issues raised in the letter by Kaini and Motie [1] and to clarify aspects of my methodology in relation to these concerns. I would also like to thank these fifth-year medical students at University College London (UCL) for their interest in my paper [2] and for taking the time to express their considerations.

Potential concerns were raised in regard to limitations of the original review [2]. Foremost, I appreciate that my colleagues at UCL understand the novel nature of the study and the emerging essence of literature at the time of writing. I agree that the paper written by Nik-Ahmad-Ziki et al [3] raises further excellent points reviewing the psychological impacts of technical triumphs and difficulties on both clinicians and students, and likewise, the paper by Singh et al [4] reflects important disadvantages to virtual medical education. As acknowledged by my colleagues, studies with small sample sizes were included in my original review; this was noted in the *Discussion* section of my paper as a limitation secondary to the developing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the primary objective of this study [2] was to provide a brief review of the effectiveness of virtual medical education at the time of an evolving global pandemic, and I believe that the concerns raised by Kaini and Motie [1] had minimal impact in accomplishing this objective. Considered by my colleagues is the impact of student mental health in line with virtual teaching; the views of 7 further authors were outlined in my paper, documenting findings similar to Nik-Ahmad-Ziki's study [3] of decreased motivation, engagement, and lack of support [5]. As a result, I believe it is unlikely that the loss of Nik-Ahmad-Ziki's study [3] would have had any deleterious effects in addressing the primary purpose of my study. Moreover, the timeframe of articles to meet my inclusion criteria was between the dates of February to June 2020. The paper by Singh et al [4] was published in completed format in July 2020, which falls outside these dates [3]. However, the paper by Kaur et al [6], included in my review, has a large sample size of 983 students and concluded similar findings to Singh et al [4], stating that students found virtual teaching unsatisfactory in comparison to face-to-face teaching due to difficulties in supporting individual learning needs, interaction levels, convenience, and balancing practical/theoretical knowledge [5].

It is apparent that we share similar interests in the development of medical education, especially due to our shared first-hand experience. It is likely that advancements in virtual medical education will revolutionize the field of medical sciences, and the COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity to explore new and innovative teaching techniques to shape the nature of medical education. Ultimately, I agree with my colleagues at UCL that more research is needed to fully

understand the short- and long-term impacts of virtual teaching   on future doctors.

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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Abbreviations

UCL: University College London

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