

Blogs as supporting tools in the teaching-learning process of clinical semiology

O blog como ferramenta auxiliar no ensino-aprendizagem da semiologia médica

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RESUMO | CONTEXTO DA SITUAÇÃO: Uma monitoria, com o objetivo de se adaptar às inovações tecnológicas e desenvolver habilidades, criou o blog de semiologia. **SUMÁRIO DO TRABALHO:** O blog de semiologia médica foi criado a partir de um projeto da Monitoria de Semiologia e os docentes de uma instituição de nível superior de Salvador - Bahia com o intuito de desenvolver habilidades dos monitores e divulgação de um conteúdo de qualidade para o estudo. O blog é dividido em várias sessões possibilitando o desenvolvimento de diversas áreas. **SUMÁRIO DE RESULTADOS:** O blog funciona como uma fonte de aprendizado para monitores e alunos. O desenvolvimento de cada postagem exige diferentes habilidades do monitor, o que faz com que ele esteja sempre se atualizando e buscando mais conhecimento. Se manter ativo é uma tarefa trabalhosa, assim como trabalho em conjunto, sendo essa as maiores dificuldades para a continuação do projeto. **CONCLUSÃO:** O blog de semiologia se mostrou uma importante ferramenta de aprendizado para monitores e alunos. As dificuldades inerentes ao trabalho em equipe também foram importante para o desenvolvimento técnico de habilidades, assim como para o crescimento pessoal e a criação de laços.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Médica. Blog. Habilidades clínicas.

ABSTRACT | BACKGROUND: A group, thinking about using new technologies for study and developing skills, created The Clinical Semiology Blog. **SUMMARY:** The Clinical Semiology Blog is a project developed by monitors of the discipline Clinical Semiology, together with faculty members from a higher level institution in Salvador - Bahia with the purpose of developing skills and disclosure of a high quality content. The blog is divided in sections making possible the development of many skills. **SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS:** The Semiology Blog works as a source of learning to students and monitors. The development of each publication demands different skills, making possible the continuo update and sourcing for knowledge. Keeping active is a difficult choir, so is group work, those are the main difficulty to continue with the project. **CONCLUSION:** The Semiology blog has shown to be an important tool of learning to monitor and students. The difficulty inherited to this project turns out to be an important way of developing technical skills, to personal growth and bounding.

KEYWORDS: Medical education. Blog. Clinical skill.

Background

The Internet represents a practical, dynamic and extremely useful means of obtaining and disseminating information. Blogs allow written or audiovisual content to be provided at regular intervals and to be easily shared. Furthermore, they permit two-way communication, with readers being able to express their opinions and exchange information and experiences with various individuals simultaneously¹. The Clinical Semiology Blog created in a higher level institution in Salvador - Bahia was developed to serve as a reliable and easily accessible tool that could be used to share knowledge within this important field of medicine.

Summary

The Clinical Semiology Blog is a project developed by monitors of the discipline Clinical Semiology, together with faculty members from a higher level institution in Salvador. The content of the blog is organized in sections that include texts, videos, and suggestions of supplementary learning resources such as books and films.

The section "To Read" includes texts that are elaborated weekly by the monitors following consultation with at least three sources of bibliographic references. The professors of the discipline then correct these texts. Each month a different system of the human body is dealt with through discussions on a given clinical manifestation. For example, in the month in which the gastrointestinal system was the topic of discussion, ascites was the clinical manifestation under study (definition, physiopathology and, principally, physical examination and diagnosis of this condition).

The monitors also produce and record videos and post them online in the section "To Watch". These videos deal with different aspects of the physical examination such as the measurement of blood pressure. A section that is much appreciated in the blog is the "To Relax" section, since here knowledge is provided in a lighter, more recreational manner.

For example, suggestions of films and books with relevant content are posted.

Summary of the results

The blog serves as a major learning tool, not only for the students/readers but also for the monitors. With the blog, topics were studied in greater depth, debates were initiated, and a new means of communication was created between students and monitors, since summarized information and lesson contents from weekly meetings are made available to the students.

In the simulations staged for recording the videos, the monitors were able to experience situations and scenarios that had often not been experienced during the course, resulting in personal growth. An active search for information on neurological pathologies and on how to perform abdominal examinations, for example, forced the monitors out of their comfort zones and improved their skills.

Another positive aspect is group learning. All the sections included in the blog are worked on as a team, not just including the monitors but also involving interactions between monitors and faculty members. The creation of texts and videos involves discussions, requests for help and teaching, with all the individuals involved being at liberty to ask questions, give opinions, learn and also teach others. Knowing how to work as part of a team is a rare quality; however, this is extremely important.

One of the greatest difficulties involved in maintaining this project concerns the time the monitors need to devote to it. In addition to their regular studies, the blog represents a new commitment that demands enormous responsibility. Video production (content and filming) and editing is an extremely laborious process that demands hours of dedication. In an ideal setting, these additional activities would be outsourced to others; however, this was not possible here, since no resources were available to cover the additional costs.

The success of an Internet page depends on the commitment of the individual responsible for it. Since this is an extremely dynamic medium, it needs to be constantly updated, guaranteeing the availability of new content each time a reader accesses the site. To maintain the quality of this rhythm of publication, a large, like-minded team with similar levels of commitment needs to be available.

The quality of the published material has been maintained; however, the irregularity with which new material has been posted constitutes a major obstacle for the growth of the blog. Nevertheless, all those involved in the project were very satisfied and recognized the importance of the blog during its development.

To study the impact of blogs on education, in 2012 a university in Recife proposed that a group of students should feed a blog during one semester. An evaluation was conducted both with respect to the positive aspects and to the shortcomings and difficulties encountered. More than 80% of the students found the experience positive. In relation to the negative aspects, the majority of the students mentioned colleagues' lack of commitment and the time required to produce content for the blog. These difficulties were the same as those found in the present study, emphasizing the extreme importance of teamwork and being able to count on individuals constantly eager to update information. In parallel, this study also showed that the blog stimulates students to improve and to qualify their knowledge during the production of content. Another positive aspect reported by the participants was their involvement with a technological resource². The existence of studies and reports on the subject highlights its importance and the increasing role played by blogs in educating new professionals.

Lessons that were learned/Conclusions

Despite all the inherent difficulties involved in conducting this project, the difficulties with teamwork and having to depend on individuals who did not always share exactly the same objectives, the participants reported great individual and collective growth. The monitors proved capable of resolving

errors, improving techniques, overcoming shy-ness and getting outside their comfort zone to extensively study topics that had first appeared simple.

The lessons learned from the blog went way beyond the teaching of techniques and the presentation of university lectures. Bonds of trust and responsibility were formed, giving the monitors the tools they required to grow intellectually and as people, learning to deal with difficulties and acquiring the maturity needed to meet deadlines and deliver high quality results.

Authors contribution

Natália Souza Paes Mendonça e Natália Rezende Fonseca: creation, organization, data analysis and scope of Clinical Semiology Blog, besides article writing. Ieda Aleluia: group leader and article co-author.

Competing interests

No financial, legal or political competing interests with third parties (government, commercial, private foundation, etc.) were disclosed for any aspect of the submitted work (including but not limited to grants, data monitoring board, study design, manuscript preparation, statistical analysis, etc.).

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