Standardised peer-training of 600 students in small groups

use of a web-based text annotation tool to enhance the collaborative formative review of learning material

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Beitrag

At the Medical University of Vienna, clinical skills are taught to 600 students per term in 60 parallel small-groups by up to 60 trainers. In order to ensure training quality, we require highly standardized and unambiguous learning material.

In 2002 we revised our script for an introductory skills course by including detailed procedural lists with illustrative images of all taught skills. With peers (students with substantial clerkship experience) acting as instructors, this script sets the fundamental standards to what is taught, trained and reliably assessed (since it also provides the objectives for the OSCE-checklists). The script is made available during the course in the form of a collaborative hypertext (by means of a free web-service by www.quicktopic.com) that can be annotated. We encourage students and trainers to record problems, deviating opinions or supplementary proposals regarding the script on the spot. Their comments are evaluated annually by an expert panel and the learning material is accordingly refined.

In 2003 62 comments were added to the system and resulted in 68 of 106 changes in the learning material (wording, additions, deletions and transitions). Despite 80% of students highly valued the approach in terms of our aims stated above, only 4% of the students actively contributed comments. Peer-trainers on the other hand participated actively by 40%. Comment/change ratio of peers was 1.5 compared to 0.4 of students' hypertext entries. More comments were added out of the course hours than on the spot. In conclusion, the tool despite not heavily used, is an effective aid for us to improve our learning material. Peer trainers are the primary target group, both by the frequency and by the quality of contribution. On the spot annotation is an option, but not a prerequisite.

In line with our positive experience we plan to implement annotation functionality to teaching and learning contents in our evolving e-Learning environment.

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