

54 The Development and Implementation of an Online Discussion Board for Emergency Medicine Clerkship

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Introduction/Background: Our required fourth-year emergency medicine clerkship involves hundreds of students rotating in five states at both academic and community sites. The use of online discussion boards has the potential to connect isolated students in disparate learning environments, creating collaboration as it applies to social learning, providing scaffolding for self-regulated learning and being learner centered as an adjunct to online didactics. Social learning and self-regulated learning enhance student education, and learner centered environments may increase long-term retention.

Educational Objective: Develop and implement an asynchronous learning tool that fosters peer communication, allows for self-regulated learning, and creates a community for students in different locations.

Curricular Design: An online discussion board was developed to supplement a multifaceted clerkship educational program. Emphasis was made on exposure to medical literature and facilitating discussion. Each week, after viewing a recorded lecture online, students perform a Medline search to answer a question related to the lecture content. Citing at least one study, they are required to post the question and the answer they found. They must also respond to at least one other posting each week.

Impact/Effectiveness: In the first year of implementation, all students successfully participated in the discussion board. From evaluations, 85 anonymous comments about the discussion board were recorded. Of these, the majority, 70 (82%), were positive, citing enhanced exposure to the medical literature and facilitation of discussion with peers. Fifteen (18%) comments were negative and focused on effective use of time and perceived lack of educational benefit.

Conclusion: Asynchronous online discussion boards may provide additional benefit and learning for clerkships through social learning and learner centeredness where students are distributed in disparate learning environments.