



SOCIAL MEDIA AND ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE

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D2.1 TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ACUTE MEDICINE

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The term Free Open Access Medical Education or #FOAMed, coined in 2012, describes the vast amount of medical information that has been available for many years in various forms of multimedia on the internet. #FOAMed has been created primarily by emergency physicians, intensivists, anesthesiologists and retrieval specialists but participation of other specialties, including nurses is increasing. It is an ever-expanding database on various topics of acute care medicine and is now fully searchable. The two major genres are blogs and podcasts of variable focus and extent. They comprise formal lectures, expert interviews, group discussions, recordings from conferences, commentaries, case studies, or just rants and snippets of wisdom and many others. Their informal tone allows the spread of tips and tricks and bedside experience. Blogs and podcasts are often interlinked and use numerous other multimedia: photos, videos, live streams, hangouts etc.

Social media are Web 2.0-based applications that allow the production and exchange of the user-generated content. They create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify the content. Social media have influenced the way how individuals and communities communicate and their influence is evident in the field of medical education as well. Social media serve as a platform for the primary publication of the content. They also allow sharing and real-time discussion of the content and provide a novel form of peer-review.

Advantages of using the new technologies in the medical education are obvious: the content is generally free of charge, and available regardless of time and space on computers and mobile devices. Most importantly, handheld devices bring #FOAMed to the bedside.

However, the plethora of content and somewhat anonymous users brings about risks as well. Predominantly, it is the patient and provider privacy. Information overload, questionable credibility of certain sources, selectivity of the focus, problematic external validity of the recommendations across the globe and bias are other concerns which have led to the discussions on the charter of #FOAMed. Absence of pre-publication peer-review emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and should stimulate reading primary sources and challenge interpretation.

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