Chapter XIX

Creating a Multimedia Instructional Product for Medical School Students

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Abstract

Because most medical school textbooks do not adequately address pain management, the American Academy of Pain Medicine wanted to create TOP MED, an online textbook that would address this need for different specialties and which also could be used as a textbook for the Introduction to Pain Management course. This online textbook would cover 11 topics and consist of the latest findings from the most renowned experts in the different disciplines of pain medicine. This case study is a description of the process of designing and producing the online textbook.
Introduction

The American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM) is the medical specialty society representing physicians practicing in the field of pain medicine. Because most medical school textbooks do not adequately address pain management, the academy wanted to create TOP MED, an online textbook that would address this need for different specialties and which also could be used as a textbook for the Introduction to Pain Management course. This online textbook would cover 11 topics and consist of the latest findings from the most renowned experts in the different disciplines of pain medicine.

This case study is a description of the process of designing and producing the online textbook, including how we determined what to cover and how we involved the subject matter experts and translated their content into interactive, entertaining learning segments.

E-Learning Program

The academy had created reference materials online, and they published articles, but this was their first program that was designed for teaching medical professionals. One requirement was that the program have similar production values to television; they did not want something that looked like PowerPoint slides; they did not want talking heads; and they did not want just video. SmartPros, Inc. developed TOP MED for the American Academy of Pain Medicine. The author served as the instructional designer and overall project manager.

Academic and Administrative Issues

The academy wanted TOP MED to be an online textbook, not an online class. The typical use would be, say, in a course on pediatrics. When the professor wanted to cover pediatric pain, the students would turn to TOP MED to find out the different ways the children felt pain, how to assess pain in children, how children react differently to drugs, and how pain affects children’s, and their family’s, lives.

The academy also wanted there to be an assessment at the end of each section so that the professor and the students could determine knowledge acquisition.

The use of video created an interesting problem. The client wanted the course to look as if the video was full screen, but bandwidth considerations prevented the use of full-screen video. One solution could have been to find or build a proprietary solution to serve and access the video. Another could have downloaded the video onto student machines during off-hours. We wanted a more standardized and immediate solution, so we took advantage of a feature in Flash that allowed us to blend video into a Flash animation. We built a virtual “set,” which blended in with the video to give the appearance of full screen video without the huge bandwidth requirements.
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