INVITED COMMENTARY

Creating Awareness for Using a Wiki to Promote Collaborative Health Professional Education

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ABSTRACT

This publication on the use of a wiki in Bangladesh offers a glimmer of hope that the times are changing with respect to medical publication. People learning how to operate in the wiki environment are giving them a voice on the world stage and medical practitioners and educators cannot afford to ignore these developments. The question that remains to be answered, is how do advocates of open source knowledge get busy colleagues and students to donate their time? A number of possibilities are currently being examined by Wikipedia including: co-publication of high quality work both on Wikipedia and within a peer-reviewed, PubMed-indexed journal and scholarship awards to students who make significant contributions to these sources.

Keywords: Open Source Medical Knowledge, Medical Knowledge, Wiki Environments, Wikipedia, Web 2.0

It was with great interest that I read this paper. Those in the developing world have long been cut off from joining in global health care discussions, with most journal articles and medical textbooks being published in the developed world. This publication on the use of a wiki in Bangladesh offers a glimmer of hope that the times are changing. People learning how to operate in the wiki environment is giving them a voice on the world stage and thus I fully agree that “medical practitioners and educators cannot afford to ignore these developments”.

Wikis can be useful as teaching tools, useful learning tools, and once sufficiently developed an excellent source of information.

Over the past 10 years they have become a primary source of medical information for many people. Wikipedia’s medical content for example receives between 150-200 million page views a month in English alone and is available in over 280 languages (“WikiProject Medicine/Popular pages,” n.d.; “List of Wikipedias”, n.d.). Surveys have found that 50-70% of practicing physicians use Wikipedia in clinical practice (Heilman et al., 2011). Wikipedia’s content has been entirely created by a group of volunteers, both health care providers and members of the lay public, resulting in the creation of approximately 24,000 articles in English that pertain to medicine (“WikiProject Medicine/Assessment”, n.d.).

As Karishma et al. have found, it can be difficult to sustain prolonged involvement by...
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