Chapter 37

Medical Students Meet User Driven Health Care for Patient Centered Learning in Clinical Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Patient-centered learning and participatory research are emerging movements in the transformation of primary healthcare and research participation. In recent years this focus has extended to the utilization of User Driven Health Care (UDHC) networks for patient centered learning in medical education. Technology now makes it possible for patients, medical students, and providers to communicate through the Internet on a secure platform. Student authors experiencing this new brush with technology-supported, patient centered learning experience share how participation in a User Driven Health Care online education experience informed their learning and incited them to develop an interest in evidence based knowledge. They developed a survey tool and conducted interviews over the Internet to report on the experiences of others within the network. The findings were largely positive although some students did not feel the reality of the connection to an actual patient. Others report enjoying the experience and being enriched through the interaction, but, at the same time, expressed doubts whether this was a sustainable way to learn given the volume of information a student has to master to attain to the level of a practicing physician

INTRODUCTION

Back in time only a few short years ago, learning was limited to lecture halls, books, and clinics. And then came the Internet, which made everything seem easy. Today the Internet is considered by most students to be the "greatest invention in human history"- connecting all to all. It is now possible for

information to travel even across continents and cultures from physicians-to physicians, patients to physicians, medical professors to students and for all to interact with knowledge sharing, research and development (Crilly, Glasziou et al., 2009).

The objective of our contribution is simple- to share our experience with the use of internet as a platform for learning and to introduce user driven healthcare (UDHC) (Biswas, Maniam et al., 2008)as one solution for the individual patient's current problem of being shunted between overworked multiple health professionals at various locations while the patients are ill, vulnerable, and afraid (Maskrey & Greenhalgh, 2009).

The UDHC platform was introduced to us by one of our medical teachers. We take this time to share with readers the way this platform works.

WHAT IS UDHC?

The name states it – user driven health care network. In other words the care given to the patient is directly linked to best available medical evidence (Dawes et al., 2005) as crowd sourced by leading medical professionals and the values and input of the patient. In this the information provided by patient and health professional "users" is directly utilized to help the patients attain better health outcomes (Biswas, Martin et al., 2008).

It is an online discussion platform where the "User" uploads the patient information, which is discussed by members of the medical community, including experts from various fields, students, social workers and even engineers or other experts who can contribute to a solution which may include medical advice, rehabilitation support, financial support, as well as use of latest technological advances, and even development of newer technologies for the benefit of the patient. The possible solutions are then communicated to the "user" who may utilize the resources acquired online for support of patient/or learning motives.

WHO IS THE USER?

The user can be anyone with Internet access via computers, tablets or mobile phones. The qualification: the "user" does not need to be qualified in any medical field, but only needs to know how to read and write, and operate a computer. Thus a user can be a social worker, medical student, health professional, relative, caretaker of the patient, or even the patient.

UDHC PLATFORM ADVANTAGES

This clinical problem-solving forum evolved to address the current problem of individual patients having to travel long distances at great expense to face unbearable wait times. At UDHC the patient's information travels through a network of dedicated health professionals who provide input for the patients' medical provider to assist in diagnosis, treatment and follow up care rather than the patient having to make this journey.

This platform is an extension of telemedicine and information technologies now in use that provides the patients with clinical health care at a distance (Finkelstein, Speedie, Zhou, Potthoff, & Ratner, 2011).

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