Best Practices in Developing Online Professional Development for Physician Educators

Abstract: This presentation describes the successful process of instructional designers and lead faculty working together to provide physician educators online training in teaching. This includes instruction in teaching and learning theory, reflection, needs assessment, curriculum, syllabus design, and implementation, assessment, and evaluation. The presentation will also provide discussion for the benefits of distributed learning environments in terms of cost reduction, continuing education credits, flexibility and the creation of communities of learning. Initial results from pilot testing will be discussed.

Evidence over the last two decades suggests that physician educators, the practicing physicians who teach medical students at medical facilities during their clerkships and residencies, receive insufficient training in teaching (Skeff et al., 2007; Simpson et al., 2007). Effective training would include topics such as teaching and learning theory, reflection, needs assessment, curriculum development, syllabus design, and implementation, assessment, and evaluation.

This presentation will describe the successful process followed by instructional designers and lead faculty working together to develop an online professional development course to provide physician educators with training about teaching. The leaders of this effort built on both research and personal experience to develop the plan for the creation. According to Ensminger et al. (2004), instructional designers play a crucial role as change agents in the implementation of educational technology. In this project the instructional designers collaborated with a medical school faculty member on the content and creation of the training. This team approach to the training enabled the team to develop and then build on a shared theoretical background using elements of medical education theory (Orientale, 1998) as well as instructional design theory (Dick and Carey, 1996), change theory as it relates to instructional and technology innovation (Ely, 1990, 1999; Kotter, 1996; and Rogers, 1995). The presentation will explore the ways that the collaborative team provided support for the learners (faculty) (Knowles, 1973) such as help desks and online learner aids, but also support for the learning environment by working with the highest level of the organization to develop policies, strategic planning, and accreditation. The presentation will also discuss the benefits of distributed learning environments in terms of cost reduction and flexibility, and will include discussion of the initial results from the pilot test of the online professional development course.


