Using Web Based Conferencing and Presentation Software to Improve Teaching Effectiveness and the Learning Environment

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Description: Our session will illustrate three examples of the use of web conferencing and presentation software to encourage learner/instructor self assessment. Assessment data can be used by learners to self critique their understanding of the presented material or, alternatively, can provide vital information to instructors allowing them to modify presentation delivery or review incompletely understood concepts.

Individuals at our session will be invited to participate as “learners” using their own internet connections to engage in the activities described by the three scenarios. One presenter will be located in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada and will join the session using Adobe Connect. Quantitative and qualitative data from a research project (completed in September) comparing the effectiveness of face to face instruction to a synchronous online learning environment will also be presented.

Background: Providing learners with sufficient formative feedback can be a challenging task. The first example demonstrates the use of presentation software to create anonymous self assessment questionnaires that are inserted every 10 to 15 slides throughout a didactic lecture. Learners are able to evaluate their understanding of the presented material and prepare questions for the presenter to address in a later discussion period.

The second example illustrates the use of learner polling by an instructor to immediately assess learner understanding of the previously presented material. The instructor can then modify the presentation to respond to this data. The data is gathered from every learner and when complete, the results are broadcast to the group. Compiling data in this manner eliminates gender biased questioning and ensures that the data is a valid and accurate representation of the whole group.

The third example discusses the use of a branching case scenario to encourage the use of problem solving skills. The path a learner takes through a realistic scenario is determined by his/her responses to information presented in a sequential manner, and can be different for every learner, if the case is sufficiently complex. Learners can compare their route through the scenario to an evidence based “expert” path allowing them to determine deviation points and the information/decision making that prompted this deviation.
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Richard Witham works at NOSM as a Continuing Professional Development Coordinator: Learning Technologies. He is involved with the identification, testing, and evaluation of new learning technologies and their applicability to medical student learning environments and professional development sessions for practicing health clinicians throughout northern Ontario. In a previous life he was a teacher at the elementary, secondary and post secondary levels.