

YouTube as a tool for health education

Sir,

Over the years, educators have tried to develop ways to make learning more engaging and interesting to the learners. Conventionally, the process of learning involves an adjustment to different learning styles in the company of unknown people in a new place. These changes may not suit the personality of all learners resulting in academic underperformance.^[1] It is important for educators to emphasize to their students that learning is a lifelong process, and cultivating this culture in the classroom may not suit the style of all learners.^[2] Acquiring information from textbooks and from teachers in classroom in a limited time may not be appealing to all individuals.

The use of television to acquire knowledge has grown exponentially in the last century.^[3] Knowledge-based television channels are good examples of commercial success of dissemination through the use of television. The introduction of such knowledge-based content gave viewers an opportunity to learn and understand the novel pieces of information from the comfort of their homes. The only hiccup in this was that it was not available as an “on-demand” service.

Then came the Internet which revolutionized all parts of the world in a short time. The widespread use of digital technology has changed the method of delivery of teaching content, which in turn has strengthened the quality of learning.^[4] The use of Internet-based applications has made it possible for learners with different styles of learning to understand complex subjects at their own pace within conducive learning environments. Innovative training approaches such as video-based lectures, computer simulations, and animations available on YouTube have resulted in a reduction in the need for onsite delivery of knowledge.

YouTube is a high-technology makeup of on-demand television and is also free of charge. YouTube has an extensive outreach throughout the world and is bridging the gap of communication between knowledge and people. Learning from online content may help candidates to excel and progress with confidence in their learning pathways. Personalized learning available on YouTube can help learners manage the pace of imbibing new information. The growing demand for video-based lectures in medical education available on YouTube points out to growing popularity of such ventures in recent years. Newer instruction formats such as “flipped

classroom” and the much more emergent “massive open online course” styles of education can be delivered using YouTube for students in the health profession.^[4]

Customized feedback and interaction between the educator and learner are highlights of learning using YouTube.^[4] Learners can communicate with the educator and seek clarifications and place requests for additional information without having to meet face to face. There is enormous content that is available for free thus encouraging the participation of the learners in the remotest part of the world. The ease of access and the facility to download the learning resources uploaded to YouTube encourages learners to enhance their knowledge on a regular basis.

However, the regulation of content and overcrowding of YouTube are two major challenges in the optimal utility of YouTube.^[5] YouTube is filled with extensive learning content. Learners might be confused regarding which content to rely on.^[6] In addition, all the material that is available may not be congruent with the learning phase of the student. Although modern medicine is scientifically driven, it must be emphasized that it is specific to regions and needs of people of the world. A medical student needs to adapt to context-specific learning in this era of globalization, hence, even though a student has access to YouTube, his/her learning needs must be tailored to meet the local needs. This is the right time when med-educators should think beyond classroom teaching and act as facilitators to help and choose the right pathway for their students in this vast ocean of digital knowledge.

Educators may decide to screen and choose the best educational material available online and recommend it to students for further learning. Online YouTube content with high engagement time by viewers may act a starting filter in this process. Online content with a different style of approach needs to be chosen to facilitate the learning needs of all. Students should be allowed to follow only relevant content on YouTube for the acquisition of knowledge related to a particular topic. This is a mammoth task, and as educators, we should make our students aware of this if they find YouTube as a medium of learning easy and comfortable.

Practicing medicine is teamwork and involves interactions with people from different backgrounds. Learning theory of medicine from approved YouTube

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channels is possible, but it must be emphasized that students need to practice and heal patients in real world. Meaningful, appropriate, and adequate use of virtual and digital platforms can only aid in learning the theory of medicine in the early years of medical career.

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Ameya Ashok Hasamnis, Sapna S. Patil¹

Department of Pharmacology, ¹Department of Public Health, School of Medicine, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Ameya Ashok Hasamnis,
School of Medicine, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences,
Taylor's University, Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.
E-mail: ameyaashok.hasamnis@taylors.edu.my

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