Helping Medical Students Become Better Doctors

Overview

The foundation for any research activity is knowing what research has already been done on that particular topic and what further needs to be done based on the recommendations from the research already conducted. The need to know about all the right information resources and the skills to retrieve the necessary information is an essential foundational component of any research activity.

The Need to Train Medical Students to Search the Internet for Health Information Resources

Medical students and doctors use the internet to search for medical information. There is an information overload on the internet. Though internet usage is high, most people do not search systematically and the reliability of information retrieved is questionable. As the volume of information is only growing exponentially, unless medical students are trained to search systematically in their student days, there is a danger of their "making do" with what is only easily accessible or free and not strive to find the best research published. Heath care delivery based on poor research becomes a threat to society.

How does QMed come in the picture?

Can you just have a school with furniture and a large collection of books and not have a teacher to teach students?

We are a team of professionals trained in the domain of information sciences. We teach the health sciences community, the skills required to search and retrieve health information from reliable resources. Hence just like the example of the school, you cannot have access to all the health resources online and expect people to know how to use them effectively. We bridge this gap by training people in structured literature searching. This helps them use these resources in a systematic manner.

QMed's Profile

In the past five years our foundation has conducted over 100 training programs in medical colleges and hospitals across India.

Achievements

In May 2013 our founder CEO Ms Vasumathi Sriganesh was awarded the International Clinical Librarians Conference "Evidence into Practice Award 2013" at the Medical Library Associations Conference in USA. She is the first recipient of this award which was constituted just this year (2013) to honor a practicing librarian or informationist who has made outstanding contributions to bringing evidence into practice in the field of healthcare.

Our CEO is also listed as the approved faculties for Research Methodology Workshops by the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences.

The Challenges

The challenge is to establish this issue as an urgent need to better patient care in India. The perception to this issue among the medical community right from the faculty to the deans of medical institutions is that "students are tech-savvy so they know how to get information online". The reality however is that though students are good with technology they are not necessarily equipped with the "search skills" to use internet resources.

The medical curriculum in India does not teach students these search skills. The governing bodies of medical education and research like the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) are also equally unaware/ignorant of the need and importance for such training. Hence there is no budgetary allocation for conducting such training programs in their mandate to teaching institutions. In the absence of such a provision the medical Institutions find it difficult to incorporate/ allocate funds for our training programs as a "must-have" for the students/faculty in their institutions.

How will participation in the Open Challenge help us?

From the money that we raise during the open challenge we will be able to approach medical institutions to conduct our training programs for the students. We trust that with no training costs involved the institutions should be able to incorporate our trainings for the medical students. We also hope that those who view our Foundation's profile will talk about us to other medical institutions, so that we can conduct workshops in many places.

Feedback from participants of our training Program

Almost 100% of health professionals (students, faculty, practitioners, librarians) who attend our workshops feel that this compulsorily should be a part of the medical curriculum.

1. It was a really good program. It helped me understand how to look up for a particular article without getting frustrated which is usually what happened to me all the time. Thanks a lot. Lot of people asked me, why are you going, it's just about searching some things on the net, you can just do it, why spend 9 to 5 time on a Sunday. Well primarily curiosity also drove me - what could be told about searching the net for 8 hours. I can definitely vouch that it was one of the most important workshops that I attended ever in my life. Thanks a lot again.
Post Graduate Student from AIMS, Kochi, Kerala

2. With the growing need for evidence based medicine, it is becoming essential for professionals to get well versed with literature search. It is great that QMed realizes this and has taken this initiative. Will congratulate the team of QMed for this effort.
Post Fellowship student

3. Your work is like "evolution". It is really essential but the impact will be visible gradually. You will require a "critical mass" of educators who have undergone your training to hasten this process of evolution and reach a "tipping point". This can be done only if policy matters can be changed. A change in the medical education system will make the whole system evidence based. So naturally the whole society is benefited.
A medical teacher and a participant at the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education (FAIMER) workshop

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