



European Medical Students' Association

Association Européenne des Étudiants en Médecine

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e-Learning

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The European Medical Students' Association (EMSA) represents medical students across Europe. We envision a healthy and solidary Europe in which medical students actively promote health. EMSA empowers medical students to advocate health in all policies, excellence in medical research, interprofessional healthcare education and the protection of human rights across Europe.

Problem Statement

E-learning is the new rising trend for the last few decades, which refers to a form of education in which various technologies are applied to facilitate student-student and teacher-student interactions with no physical adjacency present during the session.

e-Learning is not a new paradigm; the first applications goes back to the 18th century as an opportunity that face-to-face education is not accessible. (Keegan D. Theoretical principles of distance education, London, Routledge, 1993). For example, during SARS and MERS pandemics, the first applications of curricula-integrated e-learning examples have been experienced. From then on, especially the first time that e-learning has started to show its real place in medical education.

Educators were planning to digitalize all the educational materials and increase the accessibility of educational sources. E-learning would provide increased flexibility and efficacy for students. With the emergence of the pandemic, the shift from the physical environment to e-learning accelerated. The natural and step-by-step change of this process is disturbed because most centers could not provide sufficient materials for their students.

According to estimations, there are 1,5 billion learners affected by school and university closures (UNESCO, 2020). Clear statistics on how medical students are involved in this pandemic are currently not yet available. Still, some publications from the SARS outbreak happened in 2003, which give us an idea of what the impact will be.

As stated above, e-learning has possibly been the best method to overcome the disadvantages of unexpected and extraordinary situations. Besides, some recent studies show that a well-organized e-learning system can be beneficial (Masic,2008; Kauffman, 2018) and help students understand a particular course's learning objectives. This policy paper focuses on the benefits of e-learning and the challenges we can face during this process.

Our View. Aim.

e-Learning will be much more integrated into medical curricula over the years. Technology is enhancing; demographics are changing as generations are now much more integrated into computer-based activities. As EMSA, our mission is to support e-learning activities, advocate for better medical education, and assess the quality of e-learning while making efforts to address the issues that medical students all over Europe face regarding e-learning. As the pandemic has pushed medical schools and students to continue education remotely, we have had to deal with forced e-learning activities and assessments. Therefore e-learning has become a very urgent issue to tackle with different aspects. Since there are no exact predictions on how the pandemic will navigate through time, medical education seems to have transitioned to distance learning for the near future.

As EMSA, we consider e-learning as one of our priorities. This rapidly emerging concept will strongly influence generations of medical students, which we have stressed this issue, especially in the "Institutional Report for COVID-19 Impact on Medical Education. With this report, we aim to give information about e-learning and student employment as sharing our survey results, and we provided recommendations for different stakeholders. We also had an online session with a precious guest regarding e-learning and assessment activities. We will keep our focus on e-learning for the following

years by advocating internationally on it together with our members as we recognize e-learning as a rapidly emerging concept that will strongly influence generations of medical students to come.

Recommendations

EMSA calls upon Medical Faculties, Hospitals and Higher Education Councils to:

- to include all possible stakeholders to overcome possible conflicts regarding education including IT specialists, education specialists, and school's library/documentation staff
- to pay attention to communication and feedback between educational councils and students councils and to ensure the inclusion of student representatives in educational committees
- to do needs assessments to identify the possible rooms for improvement in education.
- to determine and provide infrastructure needs of the students, if it is mandatory to access virtual learning environments especially during pandemic times.
- to give proper instructions and guidance to cope with the possible e-learning stress and as well as improve the quality of e-learning platforms, resources provided to students.
- to consider formative assessments through e-learning experiences rather than summative assessments due to the lack of bedside education, real patient learning, and other hand-held activities required for developing competencies.
- to ensure data security for e-assessments or otherwise to postpone or cancel them.
- to provide online counseling or other support strategies for possible mental health problems both education staff and students might have to deal with during the pandemic.

EMSA calls upon Medical Education Associations (AMEE, WFME) to:

- to procure guides on e-learning and how to implement it into the medical curriculum
- to tackle the unique problems in the implementation of medical education in an e-learning setting, concerning practical education, and give recommendations on the implementation thereof
- to assist medical educators in the transition from in-person classes to e-learning
- to conduct educational research and provide evidence-based data on e-learning and recent changes in data due to the large increase in use
- to give guidance on the long-term, hybrid ways of medical education that can carry on into the future and add value to medical education

EMSA calls upon Medical education NGOs to:

- to provide guidelines for medical faculties to implement e-learning properly
- to create platforms where experts can share the best practices that can come in handy for different medical faculties
- to advocate for the inclusion of e-learning into medical curricula and be in touch with relevant stakeholders

EMSA calls upon Faculty Member Organizations and Medical Students across Europe to:

- to stay in touch with your institute to provide feedback about e-learning experiences to shape the medical education
- to be actively involved in student councils/committees and lead to building them if they don't exist yet in your university
- to maintain a study routine and form virtual groups with friends to keep track of self-discipline and human interaction

- to advocate for a proper distance learning and raise awareness within member students with

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