



Integration of Computerbased Learning in an Electrotherapy Module

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PURPOSE - Student evaluation of a foundation module in electrotherapy revealed that students had difficulty with the theoretical component of this module and that they wanted more time made available for the practical application of techniques. Staff evaluation identified difficulties related to increasing constraints on time and resources. RELEVANCE - Electrotherapy is considered to be a core skill of the physiotherapist and the new graduate is expected to have a sound understanding of the theory, and the ability to apply safe and effective treatments. DESCRIPTION - In order to address the outcomes of evaluation, alternative methods of delivery were considered. It was deemed essential that the time spent on practical application was increased and that the theoretical component should be delivered in a manner that could meet the learning needs / styles of the students. Computer based learning materials were developed to cover the theoretical components of the course. The material was presented in a variety of formats from text based through to highly interactive animations and was available at any time on and off campus. Students could cover the material at their own pace and as frequently as was necessary to reinforce their learning. Each topic area was introduced with a keynote lecture and the students were required to access the relevant on line materials provided prior to attending the practical sessions. The timetabled sessions made available by this approach were used to increase the time spent in practical application of the techniques. RESULTS - Subsequent evaluation indicates that students have a greater level of theoretical understanding. They comment on the value of the diagrammatic representations and animations and the flexibility of the approach. The increased flexibility was identified as being particularly useful to the mature student. Increased practical time has evaluated positively from the student and staff perspective. CONCLUSION - The use of computer based learning materials to support a module with a high practical component has been very successful. It has enhanced the learning experience for students and staff and should serve to ensure that graduates are safe and effective practitioners.

