



## Modern pathology teaching and the internet

Andrew Wood, Kate Struthers & Simon Herrington

**To cite this article:** Andrew Wood, Kate Struthers & Simon Herrington (2009) Modern pathology teaching and the internet, Medical Teacher, 31:2, 187-187, DOI: [10.1080/01421590802348135](https://doi.org/10.1080/01421590802348135)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/01421590802348135>



Published online: 03 Jul 2009.



---

Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



---

Article views: 624



---

View related articles [↗](#)

---

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Modern pathology  
teaching and  
the internet

Dear Sir

Pathology teaching in medical schools has decreased in recent years. This is partly due to the shift away from discipline-based teaching in medical curriculae but also as a result of additional pressures, such as of lack of time and resources, felt by Pathology teachers (Domizio & Wilkinson 2006).

The internet is an important learning tool for students of the 'Net Generation' (Sandars & Morrison 2007) and it has recently been suggested that watching video clips via eLearning facilitates learning (Romanov & Nevgi 2007). E-Learning is an innovative technology which can support and enrich medical education (Smothers et al. 2008).

We were interested to survey the medical educational content of the popular online video sharing site YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and assess whether it could contribute to both undergraduate and postgraduate Pathology teaching. We performed a search (21/04/08) using the terms 'Histology' and 'Histopathology'.

Histology yielded 204 hits of which 99 (49%) contained relevant information consisting of lectures and descriptions of histology slides. The second largest group of results returned consisted of 69 videos (34%) which were not thought to be useful for educational purposes because they were either in a language other than English, of poor quality, were not directly relevant to the search terms or concentrated on animal histology. The remaining 36 (17%) were either promotional material or 'Spoofs' on histology classes; these were not thought to be useful as educational material.

Histopathology yielded 551 videos. Surprisingly, all of these appeared relevant (100%). These videos consisted of descriptions of slides and explanations of disease processes.

To survey the content of these videos we selected 20 random videos which were examined by a senior Pathologist (Herrington). We were interested to see if the videos were accurate, whether they contained any obvious mistakes, and whether they were useful for undergraduate or postgraduate Pathology teaching:

The selected videos are generally informative. The majority provided useful information using good examples of the disorders being described. There was a tendency to use rather colloquial language: whilst this aids understanding on a

publicly available website, it detracts to some extent from the professional educational value of the material. Some of the examples viewed were of rare disorders e.g. adrenoleukodystrophy and pancreatic amyloidosis. These are perhaps less relevant to undergraduate education, although they do illustrate pathological principles well.

We have identified YouTube as an informative and accurate source of histopathology learning for both undergraduates and postgraduates. It is clear that caution must be advised with regards to the level of medical terminology used and the rarity of the disorders described in some cases. Despite this, the authors feel it remains a useful learning resource - particularly if used in combination with other learning materials.

In addition, during our examination of YouTube it also became apparent that a number of autopsies or post mortems were present on the site. Although autopsies have been shown in the popular media (Von Hagen 2006) it still came as a surprise to the authors that such material was available. It would seem unlikely that informed consent has been obtained for such material to be posted and its educational value is debatable.

Andrew Wood

[aw104@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:aw104@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Kate Struthers

[ks61@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:ks61@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Simon Herrington

[csh2@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:csh2@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Bute Medical Building

University of St Andrews, UK

## References

- Domizio P, Wilkinson M. 2006. Pathology teaching in the 21st Century. *Clin Teach* 3(1):53-59.
- Romanov K, Nevgi A. 2007. Do medical students watch video clips in eLearning and do these facilitate learning? *Med Teach* 29:490-494.
- Sandars J, Morrison C. 2005. What is the net generation? The challenge for future medical education. *Med Teach* 29:85-88.
- Smothers V, Ellaway R, Greene P. 2008. The E-learning evolution: leveraging new technology approaches to advance healthcare education. *Med Teach* 30:117-118.
- Von Hagen G. 2006. Autopsy: Emergency Room Channel 4.