



## Wikipedia use amongst medical students – New insights into the digital revolution

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## Letters to the editor

### Wikipedia use amongst medical students – New insights into the digital revolution

Dear Sir

Web2.0 resources are internet-based tools, such as 'wikis' and social networking sites, allowing users to actively participate in the creation and editing of information. Wikipedia is increasingly being used by medical students and physicians when actively searching for health information (Judd & Kennedy 2010). While the paucity of formal editorial review of such resources warrants scepticism, there is increasing evidence about its reliability and potential use (Rajagopalan et al. 2011).

We sought to determine the prevalence of Wikipedia use amongst medical students at one institution, through a self-administered 12-item online questionnaire. A total of 361 students participated in the study across six years of the course. The mean participant age was 21 with a non-significant over-representation of females (57%). Wikipedia was used by 341 students (94%) while studying medicine. The most common reasons reported for using Wikipedia were ease of access (98%) and ease of understanding (95%). A lack of confidence in performing literature reviews was cited by 10% of the respondents. In those students who did not use Wikipedia, 85% reported it as an unreliable resource. There was no significant correlation between the year of medical school and the use of Wikipedia ( $R^2=0.67$ ,  $p=0.12$ ). However, there was a significant correlation between the year of medical school and the use of Wikipedia as the first resource ( $R^2=0.81$ ,  $p<0.02$ ), with older years less likely to use Wikipedia as the initial resource. Similarly, there was an inverse correlation between the year of medical school and the use of Wikipedia as the only resource ( $R^2=0.70$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), as the most common resource ( $R^2=0.67$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and its perceived reliability ( $R^2=0.73$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Multivariate regression analysis models found the year of medical school to be an independent predictor of the use of Wikipedia as the first resource ( $p<0.05$ ), only resource ( $p<0.005$ ) and most common resource ( $p<0.05$ ).

The use of Wikipedia is almost ubiquitous throughout medical school for medical education. The ease of access and understanding, as well as readily usable and consumer-friendly interfaces, means students often turn to this, rather than traditional authoritative resources. While the reliance on Wikipedia reduces throughout medical school, this is likely due to confidence and ability to concurrently use other resources as well as perceived reduced reliability. Medical school administrators would benefit from embracing and developing web2.0 resources and include their use in ongoing dynamic medical education.

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### Competency-based physiotherapy education: The need for a European view?

Dear Sir

Although the use of competency-based education (CBE) in medical education seems to be well described (Frank et al. 2010), there exists, to the best of our knowledge, no literature about the specific use of CBE in physiotherapy education. In Europe there is a lot of difference in the diploma and the