Using a Case-Based Blog to Supplement Emergency Medicine Education: One Residency’s Experience

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Background: Emergency medicine (EM) resident education has embraced social media and web-based resources as critical teaching tools. While these resources provide a wealth of EM information, we hypothesized that more institution-specific, case-based online learning would enhance our EM resident education. Because our residents care for patients at both a highly-specialized quaternary-care hospital and community EDs, we selected topics beyond the typical scope of EM for additional instruction. In order to increase learner engagement, a case-based residency blog was developed.

Educational Objectives: 1) To provide continuous case-based education to EM residents, and 2) to promote resident engagement through online, case-based learning.

Curricular Design: The University of Pennsylvania’s EM residency website (PennEM.com) had a pre-existing blog feature through WordPress, a free web-based site. Blog case entries were password protected and accessible only to emergency medicine residents. Cases were submitted by residents and selected by the blog editor. Cases included diagnosis and treatment questions for residents to answer. Cases were posted at least monthly and tagged by category. Posts were announced via email, and residents were rewarded for correct answers with points redeemable for a small gift card.

Impact/Effectiveness: Since beginning the case-based blog initiative on March 8, 2016, the PennEM.com blog page was viewed 622 times. 15 cases were posted over 9 months on ultrasound, toxicology, critical care and clinical EM. The average number of emailed answers was 3.9 (range: 1-8). The average number of views on the case’s first post date was 20 (range: 4-40 views). The top three most-viewed posts were two clinical cases (40 views, 35 views) and an ultrasound case (32 views). The top three most-answered posts were a toxicology case (8 responses) and two clinical cases (6 responses each). The data suggests that while residents may not participate in case competition, they view blog cases to supplement their EM education. Additionally, the trend towards increasing resident email participation supports increased resident engagement.