

Internet-based instruction effective for teaching health-care professionals

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A study led by a team of education researchers from Mayo Clinic and published this week in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* concludes that Internet-based education generally is effective.

Lead author David Cook, M.D., an associate professor of medicine who practices general internal medicine at Mayo Clinic, worked with researchers from Mayo and McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. They reviewed more than 200 studies about Internet-based instruction. The researchers concluded that Internet-based instruction is associated with large learning gains compared with no instruction. The research also showed that Internet-based instruction compared favorably to traditional instructional methods.

"Our findings suggest that Internet-based instruction is an effective way to teach health care professionals," says Dr. Cook. "We now can confirm that, across a wide variety of learners, learning contexts, clinical topics, and learning outcomes, Internet-based instruction can be as effective as traditional methods."

Dr. Cook also notes that Internet-based instruction has unique advantages, including flexible scheduling, adaptability of instruction, and readily available content that is easily updated. "As health care workers balance challenging practice demands, the ever-expanding volume of medical knowledge requires us to find more effective, efficient ways to learn," says Dr. Cook. "Internet-based instruction will be an important part of the solution."

He also notes that this research likely applies to training outside of health care, citing studies in the engineering, computer science, and teaching fields that have shown similar results.

"There is more research to be done as we try to find out how to make Internet-based instruction most effective," says Dr. Cook. "We are currently conducting research looking at this issue. We also are reviewing other published research to see how to optimize Internet-based instruction."

Source: Mayo Clinic

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