Medical Students in Microscopic Anatomy and Pathology Laboratories: Design of an E-Learning Histology and Histopathology Atlas as an Evolving Response to Interdisciplinary Pre-Clinical Curricular Needs

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Background

Computer-assisted learning, also known as e-learning, has been successfully implemented to educate students in anatomical knowledge as well as transferrable skills, such as critical analysis, teamwork, and communication [1]. E-learning allows students to self-study material at their own pace and provides a platform for team-based laboratory learning. Several institutions have already integrated histology and physiology in team based laboratory learning [2, 3], but integration of histology and pathology instruction has been done to a lesser extent.

Objectives

Our aim was to develop an e-learning atlas that integrates microanatomy and pathology instruction for an interdisciplinary pre-clinical medical curriculum.

- A multidisciplinary team of teaching faculty and students developed the MicroAnatomy Atlas (MAA) (microanatomyatlases.com), which includes a library of histology and pathology images.
- Traditional laboratory manual instructions and study objectives [3, 4] were added to a digital interface and made interactive by linking them to specific labeled images configured for self-testing.

Methods

13 consenting first-year medical students at a large, urban medical school completed a 7-question, modified Likert scale evaluation prepared by the anatomy and pathology departments to assess the impact of this new teaching tool in the curriculum. Students were asked for feedback about the MAA as a whole and, in particular, the cardiovascular histology and pathology images.

Results

- 92% of students reported that the MAA was an easy and effective study tool that positively improved their understanding of both histology and pathology.

Results (continued)

- 92% of students were in favor of using the tool again in the future with 62% being strongly in favor of further use.
- 92% of students also stated they would advise their peers to use the MAA.
- Data shows that the MAA is positively correlated with material from lectures and that the atlas is well suited for the level of proficiency of the students.

Discussion

Preliminary data shows positive student interest and enthusiasm for the MAA as a useful tool in histology and pathology education.

- Most students who used the website were strongly in favor of MAA as an effective e-learning aid to the histology and pathology curriculum and planned on using it in upcoming organ systems.
- Students commented specifically on the self-testing feature, noting it was among their favorite features of the MAA. Additionally, they requested its expansion in future updates.

"The atlas is not better than the one on one attention of a professor. But often in micro lab there are not enough professors to answer all of your questions and this website fills that void."

Conclusion

The MicroAnatomy Atlas has proved to be an effective and efficient tool for self-study of histology and pathology of the cardiovascular system.

- Most of the students who used the MAA enjoyed using the atlas and found it to be a productive use of study time that they would recommend to their peers.

We will continue to improve the functionality and user-friendliness of this tool as we receive feedback from the growing number of students using the MAA.

References


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