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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Microscopic Anatomy and Pathology Laboratories: Design of an E-Learning Atlas as an Evolving Response to Interdisciplinary Medical 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 pathology 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. To develop an interdisciplinary teaching tool that integrates histology and pathology instruction, we aimed to:

• A multidisciplinary team of teaching faculty and students developed the MicroAnatomy Atlas (MAA) (microanatomyatlas.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.

Fig. 4: Student responses toward the MAA shows interest in continuing the use of the online tool in upcoming organ systems (n=13).

- 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 upgrades.

“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.”

Fig. 5: A student’s comment on the MAA as a whole

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.

In the future, we plan on expanding the pathology library of the MAA to include pathology images from the remaining organ systems, as well as clinical case studies.

- A similar modified Likert scale evaluation of the gastrointestinal histology and pathology section will be conducted.

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.

Fig. 6: A screenshot of jejunal histology on the MAA

References


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