

Evaluation of an on-line medical reference service to enhance junior doctor training in general practice terms



Ms Alison Marrinan, Dr Brenton Wait, Dr Helen Mullner and Dr Peter Donohoe
Adelaide to Outback GP Training Program, Adelaide, SA



Introduction

Adelaide to Outback GP Training Program (A2O) is a regional training provider, with three years experience of placing interns in general practice (GP) in rural and outer urban settings, with the PGPPP. (See Box 1). A2O is committed to the innovative delivery of a value-added program that includes providing appropriate clinical resources to support GP supervisors and junior doctors. This is important as junior doctors are working outside the tertiary hospital environment for the first time, and resources need to be accessible across a wide range of locations.

Objective

This study was conducted to evaluate if *UpToDate*, an evidence based on-line medical reference service designed to answer tough clinical questions quickly, would enhance junior doctor training in PGPPP general practice terms.

Method

1. Joint site-wide access to *UpToDate* was licensed for A2O and our six associated general practices hosting interns on PGPPP placements.
2. Interns were orientated at A2O on the use of *UpToDate* in general practice on commencement of their GP term.
3. Intern supervisors were encouraged to use the tool to inform teaching sessions as well as answer ongoing patient-care related questions.
4. The study was evaluated with an on-line 18 question survey on the use of *UpToDate* over a 6-week period.

Results

- 22 doctors (8 supervisors & 9 interns at the PGPPP practices & 5 Medical Educators at A2O) completed the survey.
- 95% of participants were very satisfied/satisfied with *UpToDate* as a clinical resource. (Figure 1)

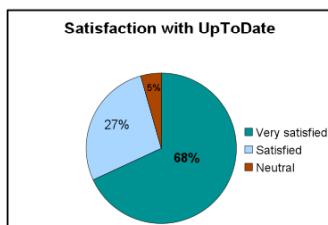


FIGURE 1

Results (continued)

- UpToDate* led to changes in patient management for 73% of participants. (Figure 2)

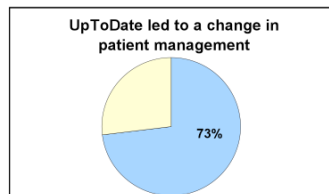


FIGURE 2

- It usually took between 1-5 minutes to find answers to patient-care related questions with *UpToDate*. (Figure 3)

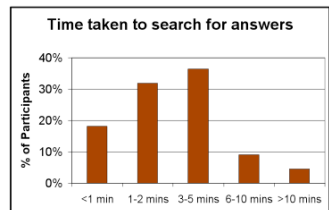


FIGURE 3

- 64% of participants found *UpToDate* saved them 1-5 hours per week. (Figure 4)

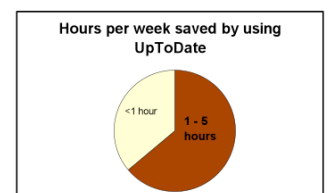


FIGURE 4

- 86% of participants recommend *UpToDate* as a useful resource to enhance junior doctor training in GP terms. (Figure 5)

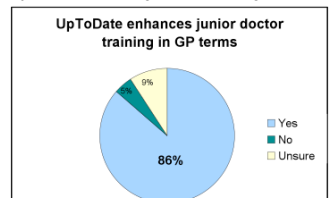


FIGURE 5

Discussion

A2O's initiative to evaluate an on-line medical reference service gives valuable support to the use of such tools in junior doctor training in community settings. Our findings indicate:

- Use of *UpToDate* has a significant impact on patient management, and this is in keeping with other independent research.¹⁻⁵
- UpToDate* is a valuable resource to efficiently provide answers to clinical questions in general practice.
- UpToDate* has been enthusiastically adopted by our PGPPP general practices and A2O Medical Educators aspiring to best practice.
- Effective use of *UpToDate* is found to enhance junior doctor training in general practice.
- Other training providers should consider implementing this extremely useful reference and teaching tool in the community setting.

References

1. What is UpToDate. <http://www.uptodate.com/research/index.asp#harvard>
2. Shilling LM, Steiner JF, Lundahl K, Anderson RJ. Residents' patient-specific clinical questions: opportunities for evidence-based learning. *Academic Medicine* 2005; 80(1):51-6
3. Meadows RY, Hodge RH, Johnson ED. Implementation Methodology and Usage Patterns of an Electronic Medical Reference Resource in an Academic Medical Center. [Abstract]. *J Gen Intern Med* 2003; 18Suppl1: 135
4. Blackman D, Cifu A, Levinson W. Can an electronic database help busy physicians answer clinical question? [Abstract]. *J Gen Intern Med* 2002; 17Suppl1: 220
5. Maviglia SM, Martin MT, Wang SJ, et al. Usage of UpToDate at an academic medical center. [Abstract]. *J Gen Intern Med* 2002; 17Suppl1: 204

Further information

Alison Marrinan
PGPPP Project Coordinator
T: 08 8366 3110
M: 0400 366 955
E: alison.marrinan@adelaide.edu.au
W: www.adelaidetoutback.com.au

PGPPP

The **Prevocational General Practice Placements Program** offers professional, observed, educational GP placements for junior doctors in outer metropolitan, regional and rural areas, with high quality training in a wide range of clinical situations. The PGPPP is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, and managed nationally by the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

BOX 1