

Learning how to learn

Learning through networks

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The need for life-long learning is widely recognized and appreciated in the world of today. In health care and other industries, the explosion of knowledge and technological changes makes it necessary for every concerned individual to keep a breast of the ever-emerging changes.

Our series in this journal will focus this time on a rather new method or source of learning i.e. learning from and through networks.

Network learning is defined here as the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences between people organized into a group or network. The group or network could be based on a profession, specialty, discipline or other common interest.

This sort of learning has become more popular and useful with the advent of the internet. Virtual networks connecting thousands of people around the globe are currently regarded as a highly convenient and cost-effective way of learning. Any group of people could easily communicate and network over the internet through e-mail lists known as listservs.

Through a listserv or network of learning, you could get the following benefits:

- Access to new knowledge and information;
- Exchange of experience and views on different topics;
- Dialogue and discussion/debate on certain issues;
- Guidance and/or access to relevant sources and documents;
- Information on relevant events such as conferences and workshops;

- Establishing new contacts and collaborations both individuals and institutions; and
- Getting advice or opinion on certain issues pertinent to your work or other concerns.

Nowadays there are some famous networks of learning on the web across different branches of knowledge. In medical journalism, for instance, there is the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) listserv. This network is connecting over more than 1500 journal editors and scientists representing over 965 journals who exchange knowledge and experience relevant to publishing and medical journalism. WAME can be accessed through <http://www.wame.org>.

Another example is the Health Information for All by 2015 (HIFA 2015) discussion group. This listserv is committed to improving the creation, exchange and use of health care information in developing countries. Currently, over 400 members from 75 countries worldwide are involved in this web-based resource. HIFA 2015 can be accessed through <http://www.ghi-net.org>.

Some other useful listservs can be accessed through websites such as <http://www.cln.org/lists/home.html>.