

Global Update

Learning on the net

Broadband internet access has made geography history. The way we learn has changed. Fourteen percent of credit hours for continuous medical education in the US in 2004 was from online services which was double that of 2002. And in the UK, "BMJ Learning" has attracted 60,000 registered users in 3 years. High quality video and audio will enhance the quality of traditional text. An editorial in the BMJ discusses the 3 crucial requirements for broadband learning to take off - modern curriculums, broadband infrastructure and learning services. In UK a systematic attempt to kickstart modern medical education is being planned. It is estimated that building a base of internet based postgraduate programme will cost near 10 million pounds. In June the British medical association, The Royal College of Physicians of London and the BMJ publishing group are planning a symposium to explore this emerging field. India needs to also put its act together and use it as an opportunity to standardize medical education (BMJ 17 June 2006).

The Indian hospital in the global village

We are witness to unprecedented growth in our health care industry. A whopping 13% growth rate has transformed it into a \$17 billion dollar industry. Last year 1.5 lakh medical tourists visited India to generate \$2.3

billion. But good beginnings need sustained and planned effort to prevent decay and disillusionment. If our hospitals are to compete with the best in the world, we need to implement best practices in health care, including hospital processes, equipment and technology. What do the cognoscenti feel will raise Indian hospitals to global standards? Assurance of quality is a critical necessity. So now there is a need to meet goals of international standards organizations like JCAHO or JCI. Use of modern IT technologies like barcoding will improve patient safety, inventory management, FIFO (first in first out) management of hospital supplies and assets. Barcodes also ease patient tracking, record retrieval and automated billings. It has great value in medicine recalls when a particular batch needs to be recalled. In the US, the FDA has made barcoding mandatory for medicines, devices, implants and blood products to reduce medication errors. Will the Indian hospital rise to the challenge or will the bubble burst after the initial euphoria - the next decade will reveal many answers. (The Economic Times 2nd June 2006).

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