

Using e-learning to support the Basic Medical Training programme in South Sudan

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This article summarises a meeting that was held in London to discuss ways in which the UK medical community, working through existing networks and/or the medical Royal Colleges, can continue to support medical education in South Sudan. In particular, the meeting focussed on the potential for the use of e-learning to enable continuing support during the current difficulties that are reducing the options for direct input.

Background

As the Postgraduate Dean of Postgraduate Education Professor Rich Bregazzi outlined in his article in the May 2015 edition of SSMJ, a two-year programme of postgraduate Basic Medical Training (BMT) has now restarted in Juba. This entails supervised and evaluated clinical practice supported by a programme of formal lectures and tutorials. An intercollegiate group of the UK medical Royal Colleges was formed to support the senior doctors and teaching staff in South Sudan in developing and delivering this curriculum. The support programme was intended to be based on faculty visits to Juba but this was disrupted by the crisis that developed in late 2013.

The group has continued to communicate since December 2013 and has been made aware of the considerable work that has been undertaken in Juba in developing the Postgraduate Medical Education Centre (PGMEC), which has included the development of internet and intranet access. It was therefore felt that the time was right to explore how interested medical parties in the UK could now support BMT in South Sudan using e-learning options.

Meeting

Although having no particular expertise in the technicalities of e-learning, the author (LA) agreed to convene a meeting of individuals who could further this project and eight people met in London on 5th June 2015. The individuals included Royal College representatives as well as people who had been involved in developing the formal BMT lecture curriculum, in developing on-line resources for the undergraduate programme and who had particular expertise in e-learning. Other interested parties who were not able to attend the meeting but have expressed an interest in providing ongoing support have been circulated with the notes of the meeting.

Professor Bregazzi was present and was able to provide a briefing on the current situation in the South Sudan. All attendees were impressed by the work that has been undertaken and were very positively encouraged to hear

that the PGMEC is now well appointed and is due to be opened in 2015. The IT and internet facilities are impressive and, although there was some discussion about the width of broadband available and whether this is currently adequate to support live on-line streaming and it is certainly the case that further improvements could well be of benefit, they are certainly adequate to be able to support good quality postgraduate education.

Future action

Following the meeting a programme of actions was agreed:

- The intercollegiate group will be re-convened and broadened to ensure that it can properly coordinate the UK support for postgraduate medical education in South Sudan. Its priority focus will be to review all aspects of support for BMT and future specialist teaching in South Sudan including the e-learning aspects.
- The BMT formal teaching curriculum will be re-circulated to all UK Royal College representatives for consideration of which sessions they could support on an e-learning basis. Depending on the broadband width available and other technical issues, this input could be via live streamed lectures or pre-recorded lectures made available on the intranet.
- Access by the PGMEC to existing online resources in the colleges or via other sites would also be explored.
- Technical expertise will be provided to Professor Bregazzi to enable the existing on-line resources to be mapped in such a way that they will be more easily accessible to doctors working in South Sudan.
- Further work will be undertaken in developing the on-line resources for the undergraduate programme and this will be coordinated with the resources for the BMT programme.
- College representatives and technical members of the group will arrange to meet with visiting Juba faculty members to the UK as appropriate.

Conclusion

It was generally felt that this meeting had been very positive and had provided impetus to the efforts in the UK to support postgraduate medical education in South Sudan. The encouraging reports of developments in Juba and the commitment shown by leaders and staff there

have provided a new energy and momentum to those of us in the UK who wish to provide help and support. It is appropriate to ensure that modern technology is used in the most effective way possible to support learning and this will be the main focus of our work in the immediate future. However, direct input continues to be seen as important and one outcome of the meeting was that the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health is actively reviewing the possibility of an exploratory faculty visit to Juba.

This feels like a pivotal and exciting time for medical training in South Sudan and we look forward to supporting future developments.

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