

Lectures to my Ears – A Systematic Review into the Potential of Podcasts in Undergraduate Medical Education

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Background

There has been a long tradition of medical students using resources other than lecture notes to study from and the as result of easier access to personal, portable media devices, they have turned to the internet for resources such as videos, blogs and podcasts, which easier fit around busy lifestyles. Due to this, podcasts have been experimented with as educational tools in comparison to their already established teaching delivery methods.

Methods

A literature search was carried out using three databases for literature between 2010 and 2020. Papers specifically involving undergraduate medical students and using the noun “podcast” were included and papers were included into the review. Common themes were analysed, and descriptive statistics were derived from categories that papers were sorted into. In total, 189 papers were found and 11 were included in the review.

Results

The aim was to establish how podcasts were used in undergraduate medical education, the effect on student attainment, opinions of medical students on podcasts. It was found that most (82%) papers had used a video-audio podcast rather than the audio only resource as described by the dictionary definition. A broad range of medical topics were taught using podcasts and included clinical skill tasks. Students have reacted positively to the introduction of Podcasts but do not yet prefer them to established teaching tools such as lectures. Students like the interactivity between the educator and themselves which is what Podcasts do not yet achieve. Regarding student attainment, Podcast’s do significantly improve grades as a stand-alone tool however, they do not yet exceed the increase in student attainment as seen in other traditional teaching methods. However, by combining podcasts with established methods, a greater increase in student attainment is seen.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Podcasts do have a positive effect on student attainment but to achieve higher attainment scores and increased knowledge retention, podcasts should be future investigated as a supplementation tool to traditional teaching methods.

