

MODERN INFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES IN PHYSICIANS' EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF SOCIALLY MOST IMPORTANT DISEASES IN RUSSIA AND BEYOND

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INTRODUCTION

E-Learning (so-called distance education - DE) is a totally new, progressive way of education. This type of education is based on the idea of a student's self-dependent interactive work and on the maximal use of the modern informational technologies, i.e. PC, e-mail, Internet.

The ultimate use of informational technologies creates a number of advantages over traditional educational forms:

- «Flexibility» (convenient time, place and pace for lessons);
- «Parallelism» (studying while working in hospital);
- «Long-distance action» (distance is no longer an obstacle for effective educational process);
- «Asynchronism» (convenient curriculum both for tutor and student);
- «Practical implementation» (possibility to apply obtained knowledge directly into medical practice);
- «Social equality» (avoiding social conditions, such as place and living conditions, hindering educational possibilities);
- «Timely updating» (possibility of timely updating contents in accordance with the latest data);
- «Tailored approach» (individual approach to every student);
- «Cost-effectiveness» (cost of education reduced 3-5-fold).

DE is well integrated in the educational process of liberal and technical universities in Russia. At the same time DE is not so widely applied for medical education. That is why using of DE for post-graduate medical training is a truly promising issue. This issue is reflected and supported by a number of official documents released by Ministries of Health and Education of Russian Federation. Traditional forms of post-graduate education do not completely meet needs of professional development of physicians. It is especially evident in countries with large territories and high prevalence of socially most important diseases (SMID). Therefore distance education is of a priority setting and perspective form of improving physicians' professional level.

OBJECTIVES

The aim is to summarize experience in development of distance education (DE) on antimicrobial therapy (AT) of SMID in Russia and beyond as a possible way of post-graduate education for healthcare professionals in such important topic.

METHODS

The educational course «AT of socially most important diseases» was implemented in Internet centre of DE on the basis of the web-site «Antibiotics and Antimicrobial Therapy» (www.antibiotic.ru) founded under the auspices of the Institute of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (IAC), the Department of Clinical Pharmacology of Smolensk State Medical Academy with the support of the United States Pharmacopeia (USP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on the basis of the web-site for medical professionals «Antibiotics and Antimicrobial Therapy» (<http://www.antibiotic.ru>) (fig. 1). Linux and Solaris operating systems are used for organization of domain's hosting www.antibiotic.ru.



Figure 1. Founders of DE on antimicrobial therapy (AT) courses

RESULTS

IAC has obtained the official approval for implementation of post-graduate education courses for medical professionals on AC using DE technology from the Ministry of Health of Russian Federation (letter № 15-15/252 dated 25.04.2001). DE courses were officially approved for post-graduate system of physicians' additional professional education by the Teaching Methodical Council (TMC) for Medical and Pharmaceutical Education of the Higher Education Institutions of Russia in 2004 (Statement of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health of Russian Federation, TMC-575 Document dated 30.09.2004).

The course «AT of socially most important diseases» consists of 14 specific topics covering diagnostics and treatment of HIV-infection, tuberculosis, chronic viral hepatitis and STDs. Every topic comes complete with educational materials and on-line tests. Upon completion of each topic «students» are offered control tests to enable tutors evaluation of their level of knowledge. The final exam is held in the presence of tutors and includes testing and interview. After passing final exam «students» are awarded the official certificates (fig. 2).



Figure 2.

Since 2002, 224 physicians from 26 Russian regions, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania and Ukraine have been trained in SMID (fig. 3).



Figure 3. Location of distance education participants

IAC provides the support to satellite DE centers in training of their tutor staff and developing a system for independent work. Currently 11 regional DE centers in Ekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Penza, Samara, Vladivostok (2 centers) (Russia), Minsk, Vitebsk (Belarus), Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine), Osh (Kyrgyzstan) are working.

CONCLUSIONS

1. DE via Internet is upcoming form of physicians' education in SMID.
2. Advantages make DE convenient, effective and demanded.
3. DE extension with regional centers is promising for further development.

PS: Students' opinion about SMID course

«... I would like to appreciate the course that is so well and clearly organized! I didn't expect and was really surprised by the quality and scope of the information and how quickly a student can get the answer to his question from his tutor...»

«On the whole, the course produces a very favorable impression.

Feel really nervous before the final examination ...»

