
Correspondence

SIR: Looking to the near future I would support the concept of an optional electronic version of the paper-based CPD journal and CPD process.

Electronic transfer of the journal via e-mail would allow users to easily create relevant versions of the journal for themselves. For example retaining articles relevant to their own practice, special interests, sub-speciality and personal development; while deleting or diverting the rest. Electronically, the whole journal could still be stored in a separate reference file if required.

It should be remembered that the purpose of the journal is not primarily as an academic archive, but to help its recipients to develop clinically and to be up to date in areas relevant to them. As a Child and Adolescent psychiatrist for example, I do not want or need to keep articles on senile dementia.

E-mail could also be used to deal with one's CPD progress, or lack of it. Electronic data could be sent via e-mail, updating one's own personal file which would then concord with the College's records.

This information could then be easily integrated into any personal programs or packages the user may have on their computer, such as year planners, spreadsheets, etc.

If the College had e-mail addresses included on their members' mailing lists, CPD data (and APT) could be sent confidentially to those e-mail addresses.

If it was the College's visionary wish to send the journal to an Internet location, APT would be available worldwide. This should not cause significant loss of journal income because this is mainly derived from subscribers registered for CPD, not just to receive the journal. With no other lucrative commercial market, it cannot be lost by APT being on the Internet.

Officially encouraged use of Information Technology (IT) for CPD should ensure Trusts incorporate consultants' IT needs into strategic and financial IT planning.

Further reading

Pallen, M. (1995) Guide to the internet: introducing the Internet. *British Medical Journal*, 311 (7017), 1422-1424.

— (1995) Guide to the Internet: electronic mail. *British Medical Journal*, 311 (7018), 1487-1490.

— (1995) Guide to the Internet: the world-wide web. *British Medical Journal*, 311 (7019), 1552-1555.

— (1995) Guide to the Internet: logging in, fetching files, reading news. *British Medical Journal*, 311 (7020), 1626-1630.

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SIR: The College recently convened an Information Technology Working Party (ITWP) to investigate ways in which a variety of new technologies can be used for the benefit of members. The use of e-mail for correspondence with and mailings to members is one of the topics under scrutiny. We would expect that any systems set up would involve all areas of the College's activity, including CPD. The Working Party will report in Spring of 1996.

We are also looking at ways in which the Internet can be used for promotion and distribution of the journals. However, it is not our intention to make APT available free of charge in this way. There are in fact significant numbers of subscribers not registered for CPD. For example, we have an appreciable number of subscriptions from libraries and from psychiatrists overseas. These subscriptions are essential to the continued financial well-being of the journal. Some means of delivering journal subscriptions over the Internet are being developed, and we hope that once the market approaches some sort of maturity we will be able to include our journals in such systems.

Dr Talbot's enthusiasm for the use of IT in this way is encouraging. We hope that the survey currently being undertaken by the ITWP will show that his attitude is shared by enough people to make such systems workable and worthwhile.

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