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CAN SMARTPHONES AND TABLETS BE USED AS MEANINGFUL TOOLS TO ENRICH DENTAL EDUCATION?

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Abstract

Introduction

Smartphones and tablets are increasingly becoming popular tools among medical trainees and physicians for finding clinical information for patient care. Despite widespread personal use, these devices are not fully utilized as collaborative tools in dental education. Social networking applications abound that engage students with content and provide platforms for collaboration. Faculty and students would leverage these portable devices to access library resources, especially electronic books, class material, educational videos and images on a click of a button. The popularity of smartphones and tablets in clinical care makes training necessary to help faculty integrate these tools in medical education.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to show that students already owned smart phones and had a desire to use them in clinical care. This fact encouraged librarians to provide ongoing professional development support in technology related skills and resources to dental school faculty and students.

Methodology

A mobile technology survey was completed by 78% of dental students in 2011 at a historically black, private medical college, to determine the type of smartphones they owned. Survey questions included the following: if they had internet access; if they accessed information on patient care through their mobile devices; or if they used mobile devices to access information on patient care; and if they would be interested in accessing patient care information on their mobile devices.

Findings of the Survey

The survey was completed by 164 of 209 students. Of the completed surveys 32% were freshman, 26% sophomores, 21% juniors, and 33% were seniors.

Discussion

Although Android device purchases far outnumber iOS device purchases, doctors still favor iPhone and iPads (Infoweek, April 14, 2011). A similar finding in this study noted 38% of students owned iPhones, compared to 24% of students owning Android devices, 21% owning Blackberry devices, and 17% reported as owning "other" devices. Despite the prevalence of WiFi and hotspots, it cannot be taken for granted that all students have data plans. Regardless of some obstacles, the desire for handheld device utilization in dental education cannot be understated. Dental Apps were reviewed after 96% of students reported as being interested in accessing patient information from their mobile devices.