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Title:

Response: The use of mobile technology in feedback

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We read with great interest the Insights article by Craig Brown.¹ Although mobile technology may improve evaluation in classrooms, clinical teaching also occurs in hospitals. As medical students, we observed one drawback of reliance on internet access for this evaluation, as, in our experience, many UK hospitals are inadequately equipped with Wi-Fi or a strong 3G signal. Consequently, tech-based feedback may not be as feasible in hospitals as in university buildings.

Until recently, feedback to students during our clinical hospital placements was through a mobile system on students' phones (myProgress app) to "sign-off" practical skills. However, we struggled to complete these forms due to poor Wi-Fi and no phone signal in the hospital. Consequently, paper-based forms were introduced partway through the year.

Similarly, across the UK, 64% of National Health Service (NHS) organisations in 2013 did not offer Wi-Fi² although in 2015, £1 billion was pledged to provide these NHS buildings with free Wi-Fi by 2020³. Furthermore, thick walls in hospitals, to compartmentalise fires, attenuate any Wi-Fi or phone signals.

In conclusion, UK medical schools intending to implement mobile feedback forms must ensure effective Wi-Fi throughout their teaching hospitals. As only 82% of UK university students own a smartphone,⁴ and outside the UK, smartphone prevalence and internet availability differs, equity of access for all students to smartphones and the internet must be ensured prior to introducing mobile technology for feedback in hospitals.

References

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