



ORAL PRESENTATION

Digital slide and virtual microscope based graduate and postgraduate education program: 3 year experience

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Background

In the last years we have witnessed that after the initial enthusiasm for digital microscopy some serious constraints revealed mainly related to information technology, rather than the diagnostic accuracy, such as the issue of proper and cheap storage capacity, slow processors, low resolution monitors. Although these problems have been more or less resolved by now, the real revolution of digital slides are still waited for. Their use is still limited to research, education and as a paradox: quality control. The question arises: why should we use digital slides in education. Using digital slides – is it just a goal or there is more than this?

Methods and results

After successful pilot studies with digital microscopes, 3 years ago, we decided to replace all optical microscopes with computers. We set up a lab with 40 commercially available PCs and two servers (both internal and external access). The lab served more than 1000 hours. Student feedback showed both weak and strong points of the system. The real drawback was the speed when simultaneously connecting servers and PCs from a remote to build up teleconsultation settings. Reducing the file size using bigger compression level and modifying the tile size of the original scanned fields according to the resolution of the monitors have solved this problem. Uploading the slides to a public server was very popular. During exam periods there were over 100.000 page loads/month (by the average 350 students/semester!).

Conclusions

We all know that once higher education is costly the students demands the same circumstances. During the semesters and for the exams too. It could only be reached by using standardized material compiled with digital slides. Using digital slides in education has another important impact on digital slides in routine pathology. We think, when the students' first impression of histopathology is related to digital slides, later the residents will be looking for it and will use it securely with confidence promoting the acceptance of this technique!

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