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View with a critical eye [YouTube]

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Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter and YouTube are just a few of the social media sites we access on a daily basis to share information, create new relationships, chat with friends or just to watch the latest musical video. Although these sites are great for recreation and keeping us connected, more and more students are turning to these technologies to improve their clinical and academic knowledge on many nursing topics.

We have a particular interest in YouTube and regularly use this medium in the classroom to enhance student learning. Benefits include increased engagement, often during a long lecture showing a short video clip can re-focus our attention and make the information we are receiving much more memorable.

By using humorous or musical videos we as educators can bring, dare I say it, dull lectures to life and at the same time offer a different perspective on concepts or subjects which can be difficult to grasp.

YouTube can be accessed at any time of the day or night from almost any location. Mobile phone technology means we can be sitting on the bus watching the latest "circulatory rap" video demonstrating how blood circulates through the heart. You don't have to be sitting in the library to revise for those all important exams. Another great feature of YouTube videos is that you can find information and learning materials on almost any nursing topic in all of the different branches of practice.

Granted we have to be careful about some of the content on view. Some videos may convey a message that is prejudiced toward a particular intervention or treatment and as student nurses we could be doing our patients and profession a disservice if we advocate these biased approaches in clinical practice.

Therefore, to overcome some of these potential difficulties we have created a website: Using YouTube critically for learning (<http://www.youtube4learning.co.uk>). The site is intended to encourage both students and nurse educators to use YouTube for learning but importantly to adopt a critical approach when viewing educational content. To achieve this aim we have developed a “learning resources toolkit” which provides hints and advice on how to think about issues such as authorship, context of the information or how videos can generate multiple viewpoints.

We delivered training workshops for both students and staff to teach them some of the benefits of using YouTube for teaching and learning. We also used the workshops to conduct online questionnaires with staff and students about approaches to using YouTube for teaching and learning.

The findings showed appropriate use of YouTube has benefits for learning but we also identified some risks. Some teaching staff are concerned about the user-generated aspect of the videos and are happier to use text book resources written by experts in the field. Generally staff are concerned about students accepting resources, which may be biased or factually incorrect, without thinking critically about them.



Figure 1: Tag Cloud of Student Responses to: Did this style of teaching help you learn and if so how and why?

Students need to think about who has created the resources they are using, and what their background or position is. Overall there were 3 key lessons we learned about Using YouTube for teaching and learning

1. YouTube can enhance teaching and learning. It can make dull lessons more interesting and give a context to complex ideas. Videos prompt discussions which help learning.

‘I believe that YouTube can enhance thinking as it can make you see things from different perspectives and also different views which can make people think more deeply about issues.’ Nursing Student A: 2010

2. Students, in the modern digital world, must develop skills in criticality – thinking carefully about sources and their authors.

‘There is no certainty that the information on YouTube is accurate or valid’ Nursing Student B: 2010

3. Searching is difficult so sharing is vital. We encourage creating a YouTube account as well the use of blogs, or other social networking tools such as social

bookmarking, to share quality resources. Or better still, create your own and share them!

'A second phase on how to create a video would be really interesting!' Nursing Student C: 2010

So the next time you're using YouTube to check out the latest musical sensation, why not search for nursing related topics such as "anatomy" or "health inequalities" you will be surprised at what you will find, but remember to view them with a critical eye.

Links:

www.youtube4learning.co.uk – the website supporting our project and research

www.youtube.co.uk – the user generated video site

<http://delicious.com/> - social bookmarking for sharing resources