

AUDIOVISUAL EDUCATION IN DERMATOLOGY

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At the June 1973 meeting of the Society for Investigative Dermatology in New York, Irvin Blank reminded me of the first time we met. It was in 1936 when he came to my office and introduced himself. He then told me that his wife and he were about to sail for Europe and asked me whether I would be kind enough to give him a letter of introduction to Professor Walter Burckhardt of Zurich. He wanted to meet Professor Burckhardt who was studying the human skin's capacity to handle acids and alkalis—a field akin to Dr. Blank's own work.

"Of course I will be glad to give you a letter. When are you sailing?" said I.

"On July such and such on the S. S. Champlain," he replied.

"Well," I said, "my wife and I are booked on the Champlain too and we're going to Zurich also. So I won't give you a letter, but I'll take you to Professor Burckhardt myself."

On the Champlain there began a friendship that has continued to grow for 37 years. Irvin and I have not always agreed—for example, we sometimes have disagreed about what direction and routes were best for the Society for Investigative Dermatology and its Journal, and we often have disagreed about the importance of the follicular route for skin penetration. But I have never failed to respect his opinion, his honesty and forthrightness, and his dedication to dermatology and truth.

Speaking of routes gives me the opportunity to discuss routes of communication—the topic suggested by the Journal's editors—namely, the important place of audiovisual education in dermatology. Audiovisual education has an advantage over the written page and spoken word since its messages reach the brain by two routes simultaneously, the visual and the auditory. The specialty of dermatology cannot be learned, taught, or practiced without the constant verbal interpretation of visual images.

Audiovisual educational tools can not and should not be expected to replace the book, the living teacher, or other vehicles of communication. Audiovisual tools are intended to supplement, expand, fortify, and emphasize in concert with other teaching methods. In these ways, they can be most useful—for instance, by saving the time of experienced instructors who are forced now to devote many hours to the repetitious task of teaching over and over again certain simple fundamentals that any good audiovisual program could

present as well or better. Moreover, as "teacher expanders," audiovisual presentations can reduce the number of qualified teachers needed to instruct the swelling numbers of students, and can bring the image and the words of great, dynamic teachers to thousands who could never hear or see them in person. I am thinking especially of students in less affluent medical schools and in developing countries thirsting for instruction.

Let me summarize what the Institute for Dermatologic Communication and Education has been attempting to do in the last eleven years. One of the obstacles faced by the teacher who wishes to use audiovisual programs in dermatology lies in the difficulty he encounters in trying to locate and obtain them. Where can he get the film, sound-slide program, or other audiovisual presentation on the subject he wishes and get it in time and in a format which fits his audience and his equipment? Where and how find the true content and value of the various programs listed in catalogues?

Our Institute has attempted to help the teacher in these dilemmas by trying to produce and/or distribute from a single central source most of the modern audiovisual programs available in dermatology. We attempt to describe the programs accurately so that their contents and suitability for teaching and learning at different levels are clear. The Institute has tried to induce, often successfully, physicians to present the skin diseases they first described and which bear their name and to enlist distinguished experts to present the subjects of their expertise. Our objectives have been to assure that these presentations are widely distributed in the present and preserved for the future.

Let me return to my central subjects which are how much we all owe to Irvin Blank and how deeply I personally thank him for his inestimable contributions to investigative dermatology. Although his works are too numerous and too well known for mention here, I cannot refrain from saying that without Irvin's original work, our knowledge of the skin and its diseases would be the poorer, and—what is more—the civilized world might be less glamorous. For without his studies on the effects of water on the stratum corneum, there might be no "moisturizing creams."

In joining those who congratulate Irvin on his past accomplishments, I know that nothing, not even the accolade of this fine Festschrift, will stop my friend from pressing on with his work. He will long continue to be a foremost contributor to our specialty, to the Society for Investigative Dermatology, and to its Journal.

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