

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Computer-based teaching is as good as face to face lecture-based teaching of evidence based medicine: A randomised controlled trial.

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 29 August 2006

**Reviewer:** Marc Triola

### Reviewer's report:

General

This paper used a RCT design to compare an identical lecture in live and computer based formats. As the authors describe, mounting regulatory pressures on work hours and the changing face of medicine are highlighting the need for new methods of delivering educational content.

This study compared an online lecture and an "equivalent lecture of similar content, structure and duration" using an unblinded randomized design and immediate pre-post surveys.

---

### Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors state that there have been no previous studies in postgraduate medical education and that this evaluation is the "first of its kind". In fact there have been several RCTs in GME and CME in the published literature, including some review articles comparing them. An inclusion of these papers would perhaps strengthen this paper and the previous evaluations could have informed this study.

The participation rate was low (55/149) and no description or analysis of any significant differences between those who did and did not participate was included. This is critical as there may be significant bias between those who chose to seek this education and those who did not. The touted benefits of asynchronous lectures and the recommendation that "that computer based teaching is a ready alternative to lecture based teaching in EBM for postgraduates" seems contradictory to the fact that there was a 36% participation rate. The authors should certainly address the fact that their study design did not address this advantage of the modality.

The authors state that they attempted to make the two interventions identical except for the modality. Too little detail was included here to accurately assess this. Were the computer based lectures essentially movies of the actual lecture or could the student control the pace? In the live lecture was there a question and answer session? This also highlights a flaw of this approach - giving a non-interactive lecture on the computer achieves convenience but does not take advantage of the many other features that modality has to offer, including those described by the authors in the introduction. Many would argue that pedagogically this is an inappropriate use of computer based learning.

---

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

---

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Reject because too small an advance to publish

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests