ARE STUDENTS GETTING FOAMed?

A snapshot of patterns of usage of Free Open Access Medical Education in Australian medical students

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INTRODUCTION

• FOAM is a dynamic, 21st century approach;
• includes open access websites, blogs, apps, YouTube®, podcasts, online learning modules;
• can effectively deliver medical education to students.
• In a rapidly evolving FOAM landscape, it can be difficult for the busy medical student to keep up with what's new and reliable.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

• To evaluate how medical students use FOAM,
• To guage the awareness of FOAM amongst students,
• To find the pattern of uptake and usage by students,
• To ask what students regard as FOAM’s strengths and weaknesses,
• To investigate how many students contribute to FOAM resources.
Medical students from three Australian universities (Bond University, University of Western Australia and University of Melbourne) were invited to take part in a 5-10 minute, anonymous online survey, in May 2015. This was a survey of 25 questions, circulated primarily via Facebook® and medical student society email bulletins. Data was collected online within the KwikSurveys™ interface, and analysed using IBM® SPSS® 23.0.

RESULTS \(N=97\)

- 63% of students had heard of FOAM before the survey. But after definition, 83% of students agreed they had used FOAM before.

**Why students use FOAM:**
- “Self-directed medical education”: 90%
- “Exam study”: 87%
- “Because it is convenient”: 80%
- “Practice questions”: 78%
- “Fill gaps in knowledge”: 78%

**Why students don't use FOAM:**
- “Not aware of it”: 77%
- “Unsure how to access”: 64%
- “Concern about quality of information”: 36%
### RESULTS

- **Student characteristics n=97**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Melbourne</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond University</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Western</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Study setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage of training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Top media used by students: Wikipedia®, other websites, YouTube® (...closely followed by textbooks and online journals)

- Top technologies used by students: smartphone (96% at least weekly), portable computer (89% at least weekly), tablet (42% at least weekly)

- 9% students had already contributed to FOAM and 26% expressed that while they hadn’t, they would want to in the future.

- Only 37% encouraged to use FOAMed by lecturers/doctors/mentors
RESULTS

Figure 1: If you only have an hour to study... What do you do? \((n=81)\)

For this question, if they only had one hour, 60.5% respondents would study with non-FOAM resources, and 39.5% with FOAM resources.
RESULTS

Figure 2: How often do students use various media for medical educational purposes (n=89)

- Textbooks, journals, UpToDate®, medical databases and websites are almost exclusively used for medical education purposes.
- Facebook®, YouTube®, Google Docs/Sheets®, Wikipedia® are used often for non-education purposes, and sometimes for education (Wikipedia® the most common with 65% daily use for education).
- 78% medical students aren’t using Twitter® for medical education.
- 42% students never use podcasts for medical education purposes.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• FOAM has many appeals, and many students are using it without realising it.
• The most common hindrance to engagement with FOAM is lack of awareness and lack of knowing how to access it.
• Wikipedia® and other online resources are far more used among students than Twitter® or podcasts.
• While there is significant use of FOAM, non-FOAM resources like textbooks and lecture notes are still heavy relied upon by students. This suggests that FOAM is being used primarily to complement traditional learning resource use, rather than replacing them.

FUTURE RESEARCH

• Final results will be analysed to see if there is an association between students’ future career direction and use of FOAM.
• Using the same survey in two to five years time to compare the impact of FOAM in medical school education, see if the pattern of FOAM use changes over time, and ask for specific curriculum areas that students want to see covered.
To see some examples of student-appropriate FOAM resources available to students, scan the QR code (left) or check out: http://foamedstudent.com/about/resources/ There’s always room for more!!