

# Just-in-time Learning in the Emergency Department

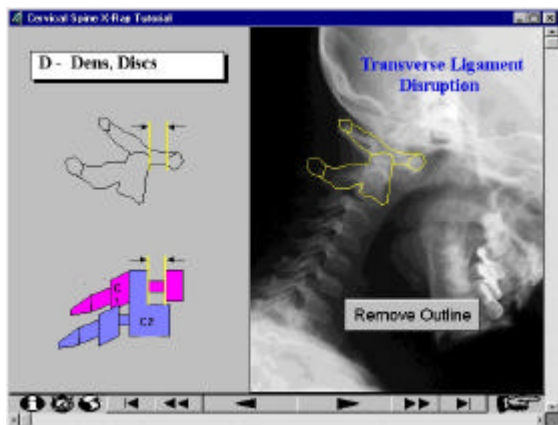
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**Background.** The Emergency Department (ED) is a daunting environment for the medical learner. Time pressures on the attending physicians mean that the learning needs of the medical student may, quite appropriately, be given a lower priority than the clinical needs of the patients. We propose that a collection of brief focused computer tutorials presented at the time of the patient encounter can improve trainee learning.

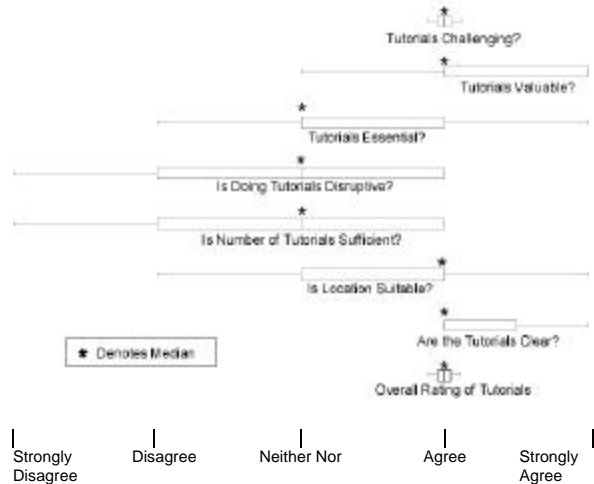
**Setting:** The Montreal Children's Hospital ED has a census of 85,000 visits annually. All 110 McGill University medical students spend eight 8-hour shifts during a 14-day rotation in the ED. They see patients independently before review with an attending MD.

**Innovation:** We created six tutorials using Toolbook Instructor 6.1 (Click2Learn Corp., Bellevue, WA) and installed them in a Pentium 100 MHz computer station in the ED. Tutorial topics were chosen to reflect common situations encountered by medical students. The tutorials varied in length from 36 – 88 screens. Preceptors were instructed to refer students to the tutorials, ideally immediately after a patient encounter relevant to an existing tutorial topic.

**Evaluation:** To measure students' attitudes towards the intervention, we developed a survey form based on the Students' Evaluations of Educational Quality<sup>9</sup> (validated for use by students evaluating college courses). It consists of eleven 5-pt Likert-type questions as well as a question asking the students to attribute their learning in the ED. By having the students complete a brief login procedure, we were able to track the time and duration of the interaction, and the titles of the screens accessed. The study period was 3.15-12.31.00. We defined completion of a tutorial as attaining the summary screen.



**Results:** During the study period, 73 medical students rotated through the ED; 64 completed surveys. There were 768 interactions with the computer (18/week). Medical students accounted for 536 (70%). In 327 (61%) the student completed the tutorial while in 110 (20%) they did not progress past the first 4 screens. The number of screens was negatively correlated with completion rate (corr coeff  $-1.07$ ;  $p < 0.02$ ). Medical student responses to the survey questions are represented with these box-plots.



Students attributed 13% ( $SD \pm 7.5\%$ ) of their learning during the rotation to the six 10-minute tutorials compared with learning from their preceptors (33%), two 90 minute didactic sessions (16%) and their own reading (38%).

**Discussion:** CAI of this form might allow more effective use of the most valuable teaching resource in the ED: the attending. Instead of being burdened with aiding the student with basic fact acquisition, the staff paediatrician could instead be freed to deliver the sort of higher-level instruction that computers may never emulate.

**Acknowledgements:** This study was funded in part by grants from the Royal Bank Teaching Innovation Fund, the Montreal Children's Hospital Research Institute and the Molson McGill Medical Informatics Project.

Dr. Pusic is supported by a training grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and by a Medical Education Traveling Grant from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.