E-Learning Tool for Modern Veterinary Teaching

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Abstract: The aims of the project was to develop an e-learning platform to offer a teaching package for the students instruction before attending practical training stages.

Keywords: veterinary education, computer-based training, on-line evaluation

Introduction. Computer utilization, as well as the increasing Internet use, led to the development of innovative methods in education, including in medicine, either human or veterinary. In the past few years, veterinary medical education benefited from the development of e-learning technologies (Bell et al., 2010; Choules et al., 2007; Ruiz et al., 2006). Internet-based medical education advantages, limitations and impact are largely discussed by Choules et al., (2007), Wong et al. (2010) and Ruiz et al. (2006). All the cited reviewers of e-learning methods versus traditional education modalities agreed with the assertion that even though e-learning is not a panacea, it has positive perceptions, allows learning to be individualized, enhance learners’ interaction with others, can catalyze the shift toward applying adult learning theory.

The present paper presents the results of application of an e-learning platform for veterinary students instruction before attending practical training stages. So there was developed an e-learning platform with five modules that covers the practical needs and allow the application of the acquired theoretical knowledge. Farm Animals Breeding Units, Clinics and Hospitals, Laboratories (research, diagnosis, food control), Slaughtering Houses, Rural veterinary Clinics are the five domains for which platform presents scenarios that introduce the students to real-life situations. Students have to access the platform before the effective practical training, e-learning process and outcomes being on-line evaluated, master teachers and tutors having access to the results obtained by the students. Students access to the platform facilitates interactions and encourage community.

Aims and objectives. The aims of the project was to develop an e-learning platform to offer a teaching package for the students instruction before attending practical training stages.

Materials and methods. Faculties of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Agronomical Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine “Ion Ionescu de la Brad” Iasi and S.C. Softwin S.R.L set up a partnership and proposed the project Labour Market Integration of Veterinary Medicine Students – Practical Training. The project is co-financed by European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources 2007-2013. There were made approaches to identify and correlate the students needs with the necessary specific practical skills demanded by professionals in the different veterinary medicine areas. Questionnaires were disseminated among students and different institutions, potential workplaces after graduation. There were identified five domains of interest: Farm Animals Breeding Units, Clinics and Hospitals, Laboratories (research, diagnosis, food control), Slaughtering Houses, Rural Veterinary Clinics. A group of
experts developed both written a practical training guide and the afferent modules on the e-learning platform. Each module presented appropriate scenarios for the situations that students might encounter during real-life practical training. Project supported investments related to e-learning technology, experts, administration and space.

Results and Discussion A number of 1600 students, 40 master teachers and 40 tutors (specialists from the institutions where students are designated to do their practical training) have accessed the e-learning platform. Each of them received a written form of the Guide to e-learning platform access, a password and an account Platform can be accessed from the address http://stagiupractica.fmvb.ro. Students and master teachers or tutors may share informations, students interact with each other. The guide give captures of all main pages of the platform.

Any e-learning program must be evaluated both for its’ content but also for identifying strengths and weakness. The number of students that already accessed the e-learning platform represents 30% of the target group. Students and also master teachers and tutors have reported some difficulties and weaknesses in platform functioning. After their remediation, all the selected students successfully finalized the evaluation tests. However, a limited number accessed the aditional information from the virtual library. A positive perception of the platform was recorded from tutors, postgraduate veterinarians working in farms, clinics and laboratories. They also suggested the upgrade of the selected domains with more simulations of real-life situations for a better integration of students to labour market.

Conclusion. The e-learning platform will contribute to the information with relevant news in veterinary medicine for graduates, updating their knowledge. These first results created the background for improvement of the platform content and outcomes.

REFERENCES