Looking is not seeing: visual art as a useful eLearning tool for teaching clinical anatomy

Rosemarie Heyn [1] - Patrizia Cosenza [2] - Giuseppe Familiari [1] - Vassilios Papaspyropoulos [2]

[1] Sezione di Anatomia Umana, Dipartimento SAIMLAL, Sapienza Università di Roma, Roma, Italia – [2] Unità di Teledidattica "Giovanni D'Addona", Facoltà di Medicina e Psicologia, Sapienza Università di Roma, Roma, Italia

An old Chinese proverb reads "A picture paints a thousand words…". Even though arts were used as a pedagogical tool as early as 1902, arts have not traditionally been part of medical education. Anatomy teaching is undergoing significant changes; long-distance education associated to web 2.0 tools have enlarged communication and interaction possibilities between users and virtual communities (1,2). We are developing a project consisting of a series of asynchronous (pre-registered) short video tutorials covering a wide range of clinical anatomy-related topics which can be posted on an internet/intranet site and then actively and autonomously be followed. Videos include short introductory remarks and legends which might be developed in different languages and which make them useful even to disable eLearners. The relationship between Art and: anatomy, thyroid gland, osteomuscular alterations, breast, ageing, artists' diseases, as well as the presence of anatomists and physicians in Art, are some of the topics developed. Each tutorial considers numerous paintings and some sculptures covering a long time span, from Prehistory to the Classical period, Late Middle Ages, the rich Renaissance period up until modern times. Artworks were chosen in order to be narrative in nature and rich in detail, thus stimulating reflection and self-discussion. These video tutorials could be a valuable teaching/learning complement to theoretical knowledge within medical students' education or even within a larger "art-loving" audience. eLearners are guided by the teacher's voice and then get immersed in an artwork, discovering it. Clear and/or hidden clinical anatomical features can be enhanced and made easier to assimilate. This nontraditional format brings a new lens through which students can learn valuable visual skills on human clinical anatomy. It may favor critical thinking, opening the mind to alternative ways of seeing, thus enhancing medical students' abilities to more deeply observe and to better understand real clinical situations.

References

[1] Honan et al. (2016) Looking is not seeing and listening is not hearing: a replication study with accelerated BSN students. J. Prof. Nurs., May: pp. 1-7. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2016.05.002.

[2] Barry et al. (2016) Anatomy education for the YouTube generation. Anat. Sci. Educ. 9(1): 90-96. doi: 10.1002/ase.1550. Epub 2015 Jun 9.