

Spotlight on education

There is little doubt about the disruption that has been inflicted on students and education systems around the globe over the last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Third-level institutions were hurled into moving to full online teaching and assessment modes, and students had to quickly adapt to these new learning platforms. Education providers also had to be mindful of maintaining student engagement while simultaneously trying to uphold the standards and quality of their programmes — and do all of this with a background of uncertainty and anxiety.

Access to further education is not universally equitable. A lack of funding for students to pursue higher education, take study leave and geographical distances from institutions have all traditionally been barriers to further education. It could be argued that the pandemic has had an impact on breaking and, at the very least, weakening some of these barriers. The years 2020 and 2021 have seen an exponential rise in the number of free online education courses and opportunities for students to access webinars and lectures by world leaders without the added cost of travel and distance.

The value of education as a tool for improving patient outcomes has been demonstrated recently in the EWMA document *Evidence of Person-Centred Care in Chronic Wounds*.¹ Of the 17 studies in this systematic review, 15 are focused on education. The aim of 14 of these studies was patient education, with one aimed at health care professionals, but to educate our patients, we ourselves must first be educated. EWMA has been a leading provider of free online education to support clinicians, regardless of their geographical region or financial means. EWMA provides e-learning modules developed by academics and clinicians with expertise in teaching, learning and assessment, plus free webinars in a variety of topics delivered by key opinion leaders. For example, the EWMA|BSAC e-learning course on Antimicrobial Stewardship in Wound Management has been accessed by more than 9000 people from 130 countries across the globe and was highly commended at the Antimicrobial Guardian Awards in the category 'Multi-Country Collaboration' <https://bit.ly/3aoNpRZ>

As we move into a new phase of the pandemic, we need to take stock of what we have learned in terms of education provision and bring the best of this forward for further development. While recognising that one cannot really substitute for the connections we gain from face-to-face teaching and learning, online learning still offers the potential to reach out to larger groups of people, many of whom heretofore were excluded due to cost and other factors. We need to build on what we have learned and make education accessible to all.

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REFERENCES

1. Gethin G, Probst S, Stryja J, Christiansen N, Price P. Evidence for person-centred care in chronic wound care: A systematic review and recommendations for practice. *J Wound Care*. 2020; 29(Sup9b):S1–S22.