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Incorporating E-learning into the didactic portion of the dental student curriculum

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Digital technology is continually changing as it is being incorporated into the educational arena. In order for higher education institutions to continue to be successful, they must be able to market themselves to Generation X by offering online courses. Many faculty members presume they are addressing digital learning by posting a PowerPoint lecture in a learning management system but offering no form of active engagement to the learner. There are many didactic courses offered to first and second year dental students, where online learning could be used to facilitate development of an active learner. The increased use of online courses will promote the expansion of the dental profession, by enabling students in more remote areas to have access to educational programs, which may not have been available to them previously. Learner support is needed for students and faculty to facilitate online learning for dental educational programs. Online educators need to have an understanding and knowledge of the following concepts: empathy, self-directed learners, and fluency with technology, instructional design and learner support for the student and the educator. Dental educators will need specialized training to develop retentive and productive programs. This will enable them to achieve a major goal of their profession by increasing Access to care, increased savings to students and institutions, and contribute to the growth of dental professionals.

Biography

Leila H Liberman completed her Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) and her Master of Distance Education and E-learning at the University of Maryland University College. She is presently a Doctoral candidate at North-Central University seeking an EdD with a specialty in Distance Education and E-learning. She is a Clinical Instructor in the Department of Periodontics, UMSOD. She is a past President of the Greater Baltimore Dental Hygiene Association, Scholarship chair and delegate to the Maryland Dental Hygiene Association. She is active in community outreach programs, including co-chairing the Maryland Special Olympics Special Smiles.

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