Community-engaged Healthcare IT Education

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Traditional healthcare IT education programs usually use textbooks as a single platform for students’ learning. Some educators have integrated case based studies into their curriculum. Yet, some healthcare IT concepts are too abstract to be wholly understood by students without first-hand experiences. To address this problem, we take an active education approach by requesting students to participate in local community activities to study these concepts. This approach brings real life experiences into learning so that students can develop senses of affiliation, relevance, and engagement. In addition, it can reciprocally create benefits for the local communities through students' direct participation.

Detailed steps:

First, both undergraduate and graduate students were involved in conducting field studies in local healthcare communities to create multimedia healthcare IT cases (including documents, video, audio clips, websites etc.).

Second, these cases were used in MIS courses and students were asked to analyze these cases and provide suggestions to the local communities.

Third, students took part in these local communities by, for example, offering a community service day to train the general public on healthcare IT.

Preliminary Evaluations

Our community partners believe that our educational tools will assist them to encourage more physicians to adopt telehealth in their practices and recruit more patients into their programs, thus helping them achieve the potential benefits of telehealth to a greater extent.

The benefits of the tools are being evaluated by interviews with community partners and a controlled experiment with university students.

The effectiveness of the tools was evaluated using a controlled experiment with a class of MIS students in Spring 2012. The survey results demonstrate that most students believe that:

1. The tools are of high quality.
2. Information provided by the tools is useful.
3. The tools improved useful telehealth knowledge.
4. The tools enhanced their understanding of telehealth.
5. It is fun to use the tools.
6. They enjoyed using the tools.
7. The tools stimulated their thinking.
8. They found the tools inspirational.

Graduate student, Bobbi Shoenberger  and a patient at Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center

Community Partners

• ECU telemedicine Center
• Roanoke Chowan Community Health Center

Examples of Solutions (handout, CD, website etc.)

Solutions

Collaborating with two telehealth providers at Eastern NC, we developed a set of customized multimedia educational tools targeting at three different audience groups (physicians, patients, and students). The multimedia tools organize texts, images, audios, animations and videos into audience driven packages.

This project demonstrates a good educational model for both communities and universities.