

E-Learning Module For The Gambia

The Gambia, tucked away on the North West African coast heralds many surprises. Laid back but strictly Islamic, hordes of ‘Gambian soldiers’ (mosquitoes), five languages in such a small space, ‘Bumsters’ (guys loitering hotels) and of course an educational link to Swansea, Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government Wales for Africa Initiative has funded an eLearning programme. The main partnership is with the College of Medicine University of Ibadan (the “Ibadan-Swansea Partnership”). Health professionals in West Africa have been supported in developing their own eLearning modules on key topics in international health such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, TB, burns and care of the newborn. This project responded to a call from clinicians in the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (RVTH) in Banjul, Gambia, for help with educating health staff about the diabetic foot. Complications of diabetic foot are common in Gambia and often result in amputations in middle-aged people who are family bread-winners. The RVTH staff had formed a multidisciplinary group to focus on better care and prevention of complications to avoid this. This article will describe what developing an eLearning module entailed, the results and also further project options.

The first stage of this process was for a junior doctor (Senior House Officer – SHO) from The Gambia, Dr Lamin Jaiteh, to visit Swansea in September 2007 in order to design an interactive teaching module with a UK SHO working in Swansea, Dr Alex Werhun. Both doctors were based in the Diabetes Centre at Morrision Hospital and were supervised by Dr. Jeff Stephens, Senior Lecturer in Diabetes. Six weeks was spent developing the module. Ros Thomas (Deputy Chief Podiatrist), Jess Griffiths (Learning Technologist) and Steve Allen (Reader in Paediatrics) all contributed.

The module was designed to be appropriate for staff cadres who are involved in the care of people with diabetes. It contained information and images from both Gambia and Swansea and was divided in



into three sections: 1) Epidemiology and Pathology 2) Examination and 3) Treatment. As well as teaching basic methods of clinical assessment and management that could be performed with minimal resources, it also showed more advanced elements of care.

During this phase of the project, Dr Jaiteh also spent time in both Morrision and Singleton hospitals to experience a different health system from that in Gambia.



SHOs in Royal Victorian Hospital, Banjul November 2007. From left to right; Dr Jaiteh, Dr Werhun, Dr Buya and Dr Bittaye.

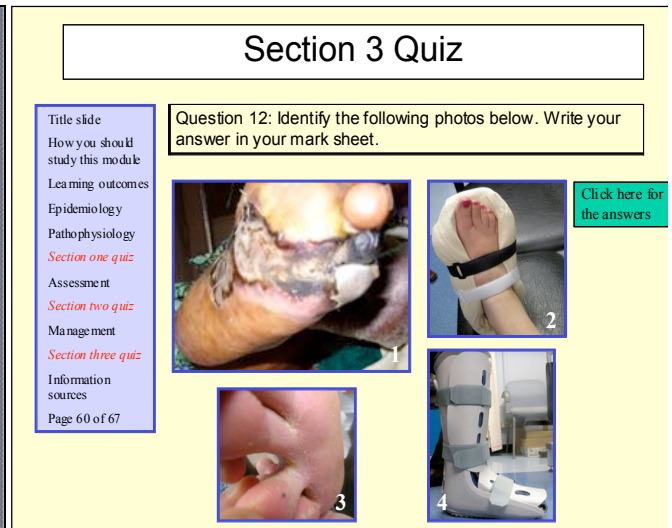
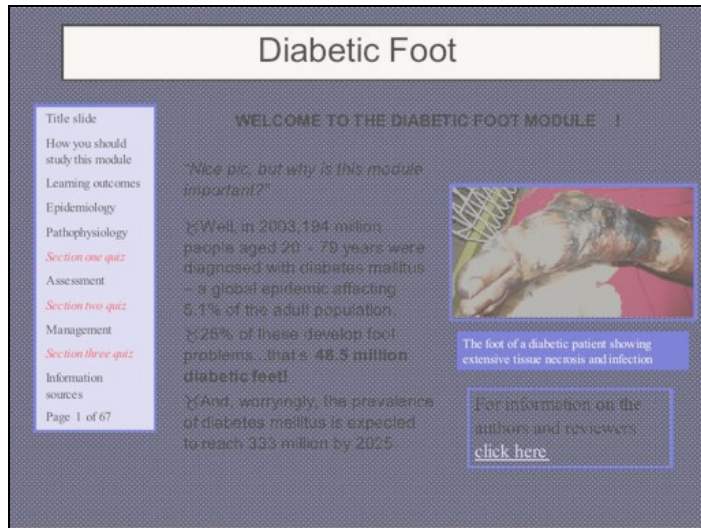
With a pilot version of the module completed, a team went out to the Gambia

in November 2007 to meet-up with Dr Jaiteh and put the module to the test. The team consisted of Dr Werhun, Ros Thomas and Jess Griffiths. Dr Werhun also shadowed Dr Jaiteh for two weeks in the RVTH which provided an invaluable learning experience.

The team provided teaching on the module over three days for eleven participants including nurses and medical students. The first day involved teaching on diabetic foot assessment by Ros

Thomas. The participants showed good retention of knowledge in pre and post test scoring. The second day involved the e-module itself. The subjects were given pre test papers and scores were recorded.

The trainees then went through the module (time consuming due to lack of computers!) within a set 45 minute time frame. After completing the module, each trainee did a post-test paper. The results were encouraging as most subjects improved on their test scores.



Examples of pages from the module: (a) Title page question

(b) part of an end of section

The third day involved feedback from participants. There was also a meeting with staff and directors of the hospital to offer ideas in improving diabetic foot care both from what the team could suggest and what support could be provided from Swansea. Ideas involved further training of podiatrists with the possibility of a short training secondment to Swansea, use of Doppler ultrasound machines to assess blood circulation, more advanced antibiotics and improved foot dressings.

Alex Werhun and Ros Thomas were then invited to present the module as a poster at the International Wound Healing Conference in Toronto, Canada in June 2008. The poster was very well received and sparked much interest. Many delegates at the conference were not aware of the enormous problems that the diabetic poses in a country in West Africa such as The Gambia.



Ros Thomas and Alex Werhun at the International Wound Healing Conference, Toronto and the poster. June 2007.

All in all, the project was a very useful experience for both the Gambia and Swansea teams. It produced an effective teaching resource that is can now be accessed worldwide (see www.sgl.swanrh.org/). Please do visit this site to brush-up on your knowledge of the diabetic foot or use the module as a teaching tool. We would be grateful for any feedback either on the module or the project as a whole.

Alex Werhun

(SHO diabetes and endocrinology, Morriston hospital, Swansea)