

WHAT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT IS DESIRED FOR A PBL CURRICULUM? SURVEY RESULTS FROM JAPANESE MEDICAL SCHOOLS

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Background: In 2001 the Japanese national committee for medical education proposed a new guideline for the 21st century. The guideline strongly recommended. Including the introduction of problem-based learning (PBL) into the medical education curriculum. At present about ten of eighty medical schools in Japan have shifted from a traditional curriculum to PBL. Many other medical schools have partially changed or are having a trial introduction to PBL into several subjects. Since one of main obstacles to introducing a PBL curriculum in Japanese medical schools is the lack of manpower to manage a PBL curriculum, the assistance of Information Technology (IT) seems very useful. We have tried to clarify what type of IT support would be most beneficial in a Japanese PBL curriculum.

Methods: Questionnaires were sent to all (eighty) medical schools at the beginning of January in 2005, in order to clarify the status of PBL introduction, problems encountered in the initiation process and management of a PBL curriculum, and desired support IT could provide.

Results: We received over 32 replies. Seven medical schools shifted to a PBL curriculum. Twenty-two medical schools partially changed or have a trial introduction of PBL into several subjects and almost of them desired the establishment of a standardized PBL curriculum tailored to the Japanese educational system (almost students graduate only from high schools.) Furthermore there was interest in the development of a case database system in the national level.