

# University of Edinburgh College of Medicine



When the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine at the University of Edinburgh was investigating ways for students to record practical learning within their curriculum, they turned to ConnectTxt to allow students to record their clinical experiences easily and efficiently. According to Jo Spiller, staff member of the college's learning technology section, "Logging their experience via ConnectTxt made a significant difference to the ease with which students could maintain their personal learning records." With ConnectTxt, students were able to quickly and immediately log their data in the clinic environment and use this data to accurately chart their progress over time."

## CHALLENGE

A major presence in the city centre of Scotland's beautiful and historic national capital, the University of Edinburgh is world-renowned center of research and learning, listed as 20th in the world by the QS Global Ranking report. Likewise, the University's College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine is internationally known for the outstanding quality of both its departments and research. During the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) of 2008, the college ranked first in the United Kingdom for hospital-based clinical subjects and sixth in psychiatry and neuroscience. In addition, 70 percent of the college's research was rated "world leading" or "internationally excellent."

For the college's 1,200 undergraduate medical students, the final three years of the degree programme are spent on rotations in a range of clinical specialties. Students are based at hospitals around the region. This geographic dispersion—and limited access to technology at the hosting hospitals—makes it difficult for students to update their learning profiles, a critical part of mapping their progress through the programme. "Within the National Health Service, access to computers can be very limited, so students don't always have the same level of access as in a university environment," said Spiller. "It can often be challenging for students to accurately and efficiently manage their learning profiles while on rotation."

## QUICK FACTS

- ▶ 1,200 undergraduate medical students
- ▶ Needed a way to make the learning profile update process more efficient and accurate
- ▶ Relies on ConnectTxt to allow students to quickly record procedural data in a clinic environment
- ▶ Students who use ConnectTxt to update learning profiles show improved frequency and accuracy in data recording

## SOLUTION

A medical research project was the impetus for using the ConnectTxt service to facilitate regular learning profile updates. “One of our medical fellows came to me for help setting up a project. She wanted students to record cannulation data within the virtual learning environment over the course of an academic year,” said Spiller. “I saw how this might be a good opportunity to explore ways of using the ConnectTxt service to integrate with our virtual learning environment.” The project recruited 82 students. Half of the students, the intervention group, were asked to use ConnectTxt to record cannulation<sup>1</sup> results, and the remaining students functioned as a control group. The logged results were graphically represented to intervention students to determine whether this representation of performance impacted on success rates for this clinical skill.

## RESULTS

The cannulation project ran from October 2010 to May 2011 and delivered significant results. “Logging their experience and representing this experience graphically made a significant difference in the students’ competency,” said Spiller. “With ConnectTxt, students were able to quickly and easily log their data in the clinic environment and accurately chart their progress over time.” Feedback regarding the project was overwhelmingly positive; when surveyed, 70 percent of students in the ConnectTxt group thought the project demonstrated a good use of technology by the college. “Students were happy to use their mobile phone in this way because it assisted their personal learning.”

Inspired by the success of the cannulation data project, the college now allows any student to use ConnectTxt to record data on other procedures. “The General Medical Council requires students to be competent in 36 procedures, including cannulation. Students can use ConnectTxt to update their personal profile while still in the clinical environment, instead of having to wait until they get home or have access to a computer,” said Spiller. ConnectTxt makes it easier for busy students to stay current with their record keeping.

<sup>1</sup> Cannulation is the process of inserting a small tube, or cannula, into a body cavity or vessel. In this case, students cannulated veins in the hand or arm (also known as ‘inserting an IV line’).



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Jo Spiller  
University of Edinburgh College of Medicine  
Learning Technology Staff Member



“Medical students have to maintain so many records and details of their experiences. ConnectTxt gives them a much more efficient and immediate way of updating their records. It’s worked so well the veterinary school is interested in using ConnectTxt in a similar manner.”

The college is looking at expanding the use of ConnectTxt to facilitate voting in the classroom. Students have several options and can deliver feedback via text, a mobile-enabled web page, or a standard web page that is accessible by laptop. “ConnectTxt works very well in the classroom, as it’s independent of any ongoing presentations or software settings within the teaching space,” said Spiller. “We’re currently investigating how we might implement a feedback system using ConnectTxt which could potentially be used by the wider university to record feedback in lecture or post-lecture situations.” The service has also streamlined the patient recruitment process for practical exams. “Before ConnectTxt, we used posters to find people interested in acting as patients during practical exams. Now we use ConnectTxt. Those who want to volunteer can just text ‘PATIENT’ to a given number and the person who runs the programme can call them back. The recruitment programme is very happy to be able to use the service for that purpose.”

