

# Feasibility and Acceptability of a Technology-Based Geriatric Training Program for Third Year Rural Medicine Students Web vs. PDA use in Rural Medicine Clerkship

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The purpose of the project was to examine the feasibility and acceptability of a technology-based geriatric training program for third-year Family Medicine (FM) students.

A one-group, pre-post intervention study was conducted between 2004 and 2005. Participants were 24 third-year medical students, assigned to rural FM practices, in which at least 30% of the patients were 65 years of age or older. Students were taught to access *Geriatrics at Your Fingertips* and other geriatric assessment tools, using internet and Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)-based formats. Case studies were reviewed to illustrate their utility. Students were emailed weekly for progress reports and electronic logs of their older patient encounters. Students completed baseline questionnaires to assess their familiarity and comfort level using internet and PDA. After the rotation, they completed questionnaires about the helpfulness and feasibility of using this educational technology.

At baseline, all students felt confident using the web and 96% felt confident using a PDA. These results remained unchanged after the rotation. After the intervention, 96% used the web to access medical information, and 100% used a PDA. Almost all of the students reported that geriatric assessment modules on the PDA enhanced their diagnostic and assessment skills for older patients; while 46% were undecided or felt that the web-based modules were not feasible in a busy rural practice.

Technology-based geriatrics education in rural FM practice is feasible and acceptable to third-year students. Geriatric assessment modules on the PDA were perceived to enhance older adult encounters at the point of care.

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