

On-line training for initial and continuing education

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Introduction

Web-based education tools provide new opportunities for educators. These tools can teach complex concepts, are available when and where a user chooses, and can ensure that many students have access to similar resources. This paper covers efforts in the United States (U.S.), the Americas and the World Veterinary Association Education Portal.

Online education to meet National Veterinary Authority Requirements

We report successful examples of web-based tools used in the U.S. to meet national veterinary authority education requirements. The tools have been translated into Spanish and are also being used internationally. In addition, we describe future opportunities.

Successful Examples

The American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education is the U.S. Statutory Body that sets standards for veterinary schools; education on important foreign animal diseases is required. The Emerging and Exotic Diseases of Animals web-based course is used at every U.S. veterinary school to meet this requirement. Students learn about transboundary animal diseases, the response to such diseases, and the responsibilities of Accredited Veterinarians. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires completion of this course as one step in the accreditation process. Since 2011, 29,000 veterinary students have taken the course.

This course has been translated into Spanish and has been used in nine countries with over 5,000 users. The course is supported by the Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) and USDA.

In the United States, private veterinarians can perform regulatory duties (sign health certificates, conduct disease testing) if they earn Accredited Veterinarian status from the USDA, which is the national veterinary authority. Accredited veterinarians (60,000+ total) are required to complete standardised continuing education to maintain their status. Twenty-eight online modules are available to meet the requirements. In 2015, 100,000 modules were completed. Fifteen of these modules are available in Spanish (38,000+ downloads in 2015). The USDA provided funding for the development of the resources, described above.

Future Opportunities

We are working with the OIE to develop web-based training for focal points who use the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS). This training platform will provide an on demand resource to those responsible for reporting OIE listed diseases.

Web-based education tools can assist veterinary educational establishments (VEE) to ensure students meet the "OIE recommendations on the competencies of graduating veterinarians (Day 1 graduates) ...". We propose to use our current materials on transboundary animal diseases and emerging and re-emerging diseases to develop tools for these two competencies. The online education tools would be tested with three VEEs to determine their effectiveness. Educators can adapt the content to meet their needs and can add information to reflect the situation in their country.

WVA Education Portal for Online Training for Continuing Education

Introduction

The World Veterinary Association (WVA) has partnered with the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA) to create the most comprehensive centralised pool of free online veterinary continuing education in the world. Given the OIE interest in assuring recommended “Day 1 core competencies” for graduating veterinarians, the WVA Education Portal offers a global solution to continuing education as a means of accessing information about several topics, including a platform for educational content required for national veterinary services. It offers free software platforms for all educators, free distribution of education throughout the world, and free education to learners accessible on laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

The WVA and the WCEA take care of the hosting costs, streaming costs, and the global distribution of the educational content allowing educators to concentrate on creating quality continuing education. Educational content is never owned by the network, but rather ownership and copyrights remain entirely with the contributor. The WCEA will upload education content on the educator’s behalf as a free service, or offers free technical support for uploading content by educators. Educators are provided with a free Learning Management System, a system used by many universities and training organisations worldwide. Educators control the administration of their content, and can create and add new content as desired.

Education is primarily distributed through a network of associations via the WVA Education Portal to nearly 100 countries, although individuals can access the network through the WVA website. Associations have several options to include providing a customized portal automatically populated with all the education in the WVA network, choosing specific educational content from the network they would like to provide to their members, or create and upload their own customised content for the specific interests of their members.

Educators can upload content for free distribution on the platform and receive visibility to a global veterinary profession, or they can upload content for a fee with an opportunity for revenue. Educators are encouraged, if offering their content for a fee, that it be offered at a discounted fee for learners in developing countries. Educators are provided with statistics and detailed reports on the distribution and sales of their education.

Summary

The WVA Education Portal has solved the complexities of providing Continuing Education (CE) in the format that qualifies in each country/state/province with such capabilities as recognition by CE accreditors, completion certificates, evaluation statements, recording of the completed CE by varying and required measurements (Credits/Hours/Points/Units), and the future capability to automatically report required CE courses to regulatory entities.

The WVA acknowledges the WCEA for contributions to this presentation.

Conclusion

Online learning is a powerful tool to improve veterinary capacity around the world.
