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Authors

Singh, Rohan
Farr, Morgan A
Chan, Warren H
[et al.](#)

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Beyond traditional meetings and webinars: identifying the educational preferences of practicing dermatologists

Rohan Singh^{1*} BS, Morgan A Farr^{1*} BS, Warren H Chan¹ MS, Zeynep M Akkurt² MD, William W Huang² MD, Lindsay C Strowd² MD, Steven R Feldman^{1,3,4} MD PhD

*Authors contributed equally

Affiliations: ¹Center for Dermatology Research, Department of Dermatology, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, ²Department of Dermatology, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, ³Department of Pathology, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, ⁴Department of Social Sciences & Health Policy, Wake Forest School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA

Corresponding Author: Steven R Feldman, MD, PhD, Department of Dermatology, Wake Forest School of Medicine, 1 Medical Center Boulevard, Winston-Salem, NC 27157-1071, Tel: 336-716-7740, Email: sfeldman@wakehealth.edu

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To the Editor:

The advent of new technologies, tele-health, and the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic have all contributed to shifting educational priorities and learning preferences in dermatology [1]. Physicians are under time constraints and pressures that may make it difficult to capture their attention and priority for important educational activities [2]. Identifying which educational activities physicians prefer may facilitate enhanced engagement and participation. This study surveys practicing dermatologists to understand their learning preferences information they want to know and how they would like to learn it. Study results will help tailor new dermatology continuing medical education (CME) programs to the preferences of potential participants.

We developed an eleven-question survey using a PubMed review of literature on the following topics: continuing medical education, educational needs in dermatology, online learning, and distance learning [3-6]. The questionnaire was then distributed to 72 former dermatology residents of Wake Forest via electronic mail. Statistical analysis was performed using qualitative descriptions, and where possible, consensus suggestions based on responses.

A total of 16 dermatologists responded: 75% were medical dermatologists, 12.5% were procedural, 6.3% were both medical and cosmetic, and 6.3% were general. Of thirteen open-ended responses, ten dermatologists independently reported updates on new therapeutics and management for common skin conditions would be useful topics for practicing dermatologists. Other agreed-upon topics included dermoscopy (3) and cutaneous oncology (3).

Respondents could choose up to five learning methods they find most engaging and useful. The most engaging learning methods selected were case-based discussions (9), expert panels and podcasts (8), departmental grand rounds (7), and recorded lectures (7), (**Figure 1**). The most useful learning methods selected were case-based discussions (9), expert panels (7), journal-based education (7), and podcasts (7), (**Figure 2**).

Respondents preferred online recorded meetings (12), a lecture format (10), large group formats (9), and no preference for single lecturer versus panel discussion sessions (12), (**Table 1**). Respondents also liked the idea of collecting questions about specific patients from practicing dermatologists and an expert-led discussion on those patients (12). The ideal learning sessions length were 30-45 minutes and were after office hours (i.e., 5pm-12am).



Figure 1. Learning methods that dermatologists found the most engaging. The 16 respondents were allowed to pick up to 5 choices. The most engaging learning methods were case-based discussions, followed by podcasts and expert panels.

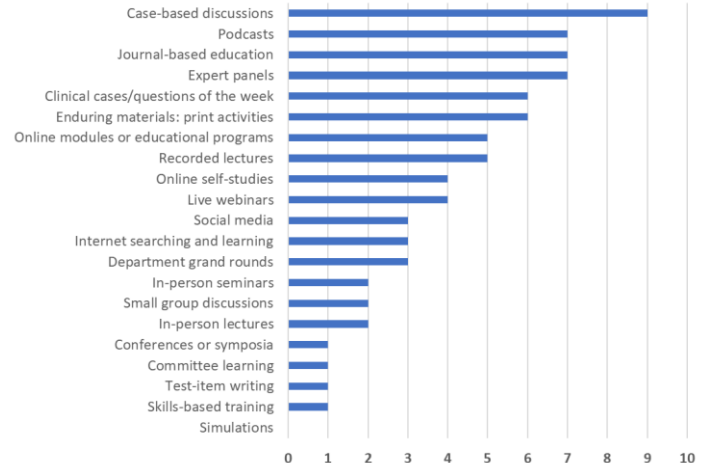


Figure 2. Learning methods that dermatologists found the most useful. The 15 respondents were allowed to pick up to 5 choices. The most useful learning methods were case-based discussions, followed by podcasts, expert panels, and journal-based education.

Respondents stated grand rounds-style presentations focused on patient cases followed by an in-depth discussion of differential diagnosis, clinic-pathological diagnosis, and treatment options. In addition, a panel discussion on interesting submitted cases with tips and pearls may be fun and entertaining ways to learn new material (Table 2).

Although our study was limited by a low response rate and sample size, the response rate of physicians to online surveys is generally around 35% when monetary incentives are included [7]. Despite the

small sample size, our study identified important qualitative data on physician attitudes towards continuing education modalities, which can help inform educators on best practices for the development of new educational activities. Incorporation of dermatologist preferences may allow future CME endeavors to be more useful, engaging, and relevant to participants. In summary, dermatologists preferred updates on management and new therapeutics that were online, recorded, and occurred in the evening after 5 pm for 30-45 minutes (Table 3).

Table 1. Survey questions.

Question	Responses	
	Online	In-person
Do you prefer online or in-person meetings to learn new info?	12 (75%)	4 (25%)
Do you prefer learning new material via real-time interactive or recorded modalities?	Recorded 9 (60%)	Real-time 6 (40%)
Would you prefer a lecture format or interactive sessions?	Lecture 10 (62%)	Interactive 6 (38%)
Would you like small or large group sessions?	Small group 7 (44%)	Large group 9 (56%)
Would you like sessions in which we collect questions you may have about your patients and have an expert-led discussion focused on your specific questions/patients?	Yes 13 (81%)	No 3 (19%)
What dermatology topics would you find most useful?		
Which learning methods do you find the most fun and entertaining?		
Which learning methods do you find the most useful?		
How long would your ideal learning sessions last?		
Which times of the day are best for you to learn about new dermatology topics?		

Potential conflicts of interest

Steve Feldman has received research, speaking and/or consulting support from Eli Lilly and Company, GlaxoSmithKline/Stiefel, AbbVie, Janssen, Alovtech, vTv Therapeutics, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Samsung, Pfizer, Boehringer Ingelheim, Amgen Inc, Dermavant, Arcutis, Novartis, Novan, UCB, Helsinn, Sun Pharma, Almirall, Galderma, Leo Pharma, Mylan, Celgene, Valeant, Menlo, Merck & Co, Qurient Forte,

Arena, Biocon, Accordant, Argenx, Sanofi, Regeneron, the National Biological Corporation, Caremark, Advance Medical, Suncare Research, Informa, UpToDate and the National Psoriasis Foundation. He is also the founder and majority owner of www.DrScore.com [drscore.com] and founder and part owner of Causa Research. Strowd has received grants, speaker fees, or research funding from Pfizer, Galderma, Regeneron, Sanofi, and Lilly.

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Table 2. Dermatologists' ideas for fun and useful continuing medical education.

Survey Question	Response
Please take 2 minutes to think about what you would find to be the most fun and entertaining ways of learning about your desired topics. Think beyond the usual meetings and zooms! Would you like interactive sessions? Small groups? Sessions focused on specific issues or patients you ask us about? Please list any and all ideas you may have.	Game show style photos with questions that are multiple choice
	Sessions focused on patients I ask about
	Having too much interaction between speaker and audience can sometimes lead to one audience member highjacking a lecture. Many times they ask questions that may not apply to me or that I may already know answer to. I prefer to at least have speaker finish an organized presentation before questions/interaction
	Apps with game-like approach
	Case-based studies that are interactive, discussion of treatment options, next steps in managements, etc.
	Grand rounds type discussions with sessions focused on a patient case followed by an in depth discussion of the differential, diagnostic and treatment options.
	Small group sessions or ask the expert type experiences
	Interactive sessions, expert opinions
	Questions through case examples, quiz format with immediate feedback after each question and a discussion
	Recorded so can watch in my own time, cases are a nice way to learn, I would like specifics in therapeutics not just drug name, but lab monitoring etc
	Something virtual or live but recorded would be best for me! A panel discussion of interesting cases or submitted cases perhaps, tips and pearls session with maybe 5-10 minutes per attending
	Conferences in Hawaii or mountains
	I think an effective lecturer can make a mundane topic less boring even enjoyable depending on presentation style. I learn a lot from a lecture who can keep a hold of my attention. Small groups/panels of experts answering high yield topics questions. Clinical vignettes demonstrating practical concepts in arriving at correct diagnosis treatment and management

Table 3. Summary recommendations for new continuing medical education initiatives.

Focus topics	Updates on management and new therapeutics for common skin conditions
Learning methods	Case-based discussions; expert-led discussion focused on dermatologist-submitted questions about specific patients
Learning format	Online, recorded
Length of sessions	30-45 minutes
Time of day	Evenings after 5pm
Model	Expert-led case-based presentation and quiz questions followed by immediate feedback and interactive discussion about the differential diagnosis, next steps in management, and treatment options. 10-15 min per case, 3-4 cases per session, rotating topics each session. Cases submitted beforehand by dermatologists. Audience response software to poll audience responses to quiz questions can be a useful addition.