



Continuing the conversation – Free Open Access Meducation (FOAM)

Jack Barton & Jonathan Round

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always allow us to fully care about, care for and care with patients.

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of this article.

ORCID

Krishna Parmar  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7613-1141>
Emma Louise Kirby  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6803-4122>

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Krishna Parmar  and Emma Louise Kirby 
School of Medicine, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
 parmarkg@cardiff.ac.uk

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Dear Editor

We have read with interest the article “Social-media-enabled learning in emergency medicine: a case study of the growth, engagement, and impact of a free open access medical education blog” (Carley et al. 2018) and the subsequent letter of correspondence in response (Hoskins 2018).

As a medical student, as well as a practicing physician and medical educator, these articles both resonate with and raise important questions for us. Free Open Access Meducation (FOAM) has become a daily part of our professional and educational lives. In an internal study within our institution, we found that undergraduate students estimated that they spent 47% of their time working outside of scheduled educational activities using FOAM resources. Yet, we are consistently confronted with the fact that there is very limited research evidence relating to its effectiveness and optimal usage.

FOAM is promoted as a means by which to solve some of the challenges associated with contemporary medical education and research, such as inaccessibility of materials and the duration of time it takes to disseminate key research. Yet it seems, at least on face value, that a false dichotomy has been created in which FOAM is now an adversary to research on its application. Currently there is minimal information on how FOAM is currently being used, how it compares to other sources of educational material or useful guidance on how educators and students can best interact with FOAM. Many traditionally trained physicians promote the use of alternative materials and resources as a more effective means of learning and yet, we are left with almost no research evidence to support or refute these claims.

Therefore, the key point that we would like to emphasize is the need to continue the conversation in this area

and investigate this exciting method of medical education. We plan to continue to do so and we very much hope to see more related publications within *Medical Teacher* in the future.

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ORCID

Jack Barton  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7376-4197>
Jonathan Round  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7404-2006>

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Jack Barton  and Jonathan Round 
St George's University, Cranmer Terrace, Tooting, London, SW17 0RE, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 m1702438@sgul.ac.uk

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