



**Caught and taught: A call to improve digital professionalism  
among medical students**  
**Attraper et enseigner : appel à l'amélioration du  
professionnalisme numérique chez les étudiants en médecine**

Yao Kang Shuy et Lavisha S Punjabi

Volume 13, numéro 6, 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1094279ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.74918>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Canadian Medical Education Journal

ISSN

1923-1202 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Shuy, Y. & Punjabi, L. (2022). Caught and taught: A call to improve digital professionalism among medical students. *Canadian Medical Education Journal / Revue canadienne de l'éducation médicale*, 13(6), 101–102.  
<https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.74918>

© Yao Kang Shuy, Lavisha S Punjabi, 2022



Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

## Caught and taught: a call to improve digital professionalism among medical students

### Attraper et enseigner : Appel à l'amélioration du professionnalisme numérique chez les étudiants en médecine

Yao Kang Shuy,<sup>1</sup> Lavisha S Punjabi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; <sup>2</sup>Singapore General Hospital, Singapore

Correspondence to: Lavisha S Punjabi, Department of Anatomical Pathology, Singapore General Hospital, 20 College Road, Singapore 169856;

email: lavisha.s.punjabi@gmail.com; Twitter: @punjabiopsy

Published ahead of issue: June 7, 2022; published: Nov 15, 2022. CMEJ 2022, 13(6). Available at <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.74918>

© 2022 Shuy, Punjabi; licensee Synergies Partners. This is an Open Journal Systems article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons

Attribution License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated abrupt changes to medical education, in particular the adoption of virtual methods of teaching and learning.<sup>1</sup> With an anticipated state of viral endemicity, however, many of these changes, initially implemented as interim measures, may themselves become “endemic.”<sup>2</sup> This raises the consideration of their wider implications on education and healthcare, which may have been blind spots when stopgap measures were enforced at the height of the pandemic. In this letter, we focus on one such area—personal conduct and professionalism in the digital space.

Good personal conduct on digital platforms has hitherto been “caught” through mistakes or embarrassment of oneself or one’s peers. However, the pedagogy of learning from one’s mistakes is inappropriate in this context, given the immortal nature of the digital footprint, capable of significant or long-term harm. Take for example a student who makes an inappropriate comment during a lecture. In the physical setting, the educator may consider nimbly addressing the classroom and subsequently bringing the student aside to reflect on the incident. In the digital space however, the student’s inappropriate comment may potentially be recorded and disseminated, either by formal lecture recording systems that are gaining popularity,<sup>3</sup> or by the student’s peers. This illustrates the importance of developing strategies to inculcate professionalism in the digital space as well as the duty to methodically review and edit material before it is subsequently released for wider or public access. In healthcare education, there is an

additional facet of maintaining patient confidentiality which must likewise be respected in the digital space.

At the same time, we ought to also consider the end-goal of medical education—patient care. This wave of change presents an opportunity for educators to reflect on how to prepare students for healthcare of tomorrow. Telemedicine, proven to be non-inferior to face-to-face visits for certain conditions,<sup>4</sup> has recently gained tremendous popularity as healthcare institutions defer non-critical patient care to increase capacity for COVID-19 patients.<sup>5</sup> Educators thus have a responsibility to develop students’ competencies in telehealth. A robust curriculum would ideally incorporate learning outcomes in technical and interpersonal domains, with an emphasis on appreciating the differences between virtual and in-person consultations and developing empathy and non-verbal skills on this platform.

Evidently, there is immense potential for medical education to evolve alongside the changing demands of healthcare. As we transition towards an increasingly digitalized practice, a new set of rules define the gold standard of care and professionalism. These seemingly insignificant skills must be taught with intent, lest they get caught out by the unforgiving pace of medical transformation.

**Conflicts of Interest:** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

**Funding:** None

**Acknowledgements:** The authors would like to thank the faculty of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine and the faculty of the Digital Communications Fellowship in Pathology (#DCFPath), respectively.

## References

1. Binks AP, LeClair RJ, Willey JM, et al. Changing Medical Education, Overnight: The Curricular Response to COVID-19 of Nine Medical Schools. *Teach Learn Med.* 2021;33(3):334-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2021.1891543>
2. Deguma JJ, Capuno RG, Manguilimotan RP, Padillo GG, Deguma MC. Redefining public health and sustainable economy: Covid-19 from pandemic to endemic. *J Public Health (Oxf).* 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab331>
3. Hussain A, Tabrez E, Basu A, D'Silva CSM. Medical Students' Perception of the Usage of Lecture Recording Software. *Cureus.* 2018;10(7):e2963. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.2963>
4. Portnoy JM, Waller M, De Lurgio S, Dinakar C. Telemedicine is as effective as in-person visits for patients with asthma. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol.* 2016;117(3):241-5. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anai.2016.07.012>
5. Brown AM, Ardila-Gatas J, Yuan V, et al. The Impact of Telemedicine Adoption on a Multidisciplinary Bariatric Surgery Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Ann Surg.* 2020;272(6):e306-e10. <https://doi.org/10.1097/sla.0000000000004391>