

WhatsAppinars: A New Way to Online Academic Education

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Technology, especially the social technology that creates and connects group of individuals, has seen exponential growth in last decade. Sites like Facebook, Twitter and apps like WhatsApp and telegram have revolutionised how we connect and interact with each other. There are many positives and negatives of these technologies that has been pointed out with special mention to use in medicine.

JOCR and IORG have been making use of these social technologies since a decade now, with our Facebook group starting in 2009. The group on Facebook is called the Indian Orthopaedic Research Group and was started by a handful of surgeons. However today after a decade there are more than twenty-two thousand orthopaedic surgeons from around the globe in this group. This has helped us create a network where cases can be discussed, and knowledge can be shared. Once WhatsApp went popular, we also created our academic network on WhatsApp. The network on WhatsApp includes various subspecialty groups like trauma, Hip, Pelvic acetabular, Arthroplasty, Arthroscopy and many more. IORG runs a total of 157 WhatsApp groups on various topics, and all groups have the format of mentors with group of more than 200 surgeons with case discussions and master classes.

Another tool that IORG has used effectively for orthopaedic education is webinar series through OrthoTV. These webinars have been conducted since 2017 regularly and are in its third volume this year. Since we could advertise the webinars on our social network, we have a minimum of 1000 to 1200 surgeons attending our live webinars and more watching the Retelecast. This over a period became very popular with Surgeons across our network, and there was more demand of these webinars across all groups. Still, webinar software have limitations of being quite costly and have limited number of members who can join, and interaction is also limited. The software is at times complex, and many do not interact at all. Looking at these limitations of webinar software and keeping in mind our WhatsApp groups, we started looking for solutions. Meanwhile, WhatsApp launched a feature where videos can be viewed without being downloaded completely. In meant that the videos were like being streamed live.

This technology helped us create a workaround to do something that was never being reported before. It took several months to decode this technology which combined three different concepts with webinar software, google hangouts and youtube at its core working together simultaneously to stream a Live Webinar on WhatsApp. The combination of technologies allowed us to Live Stream a Live Webinar on WhatsApp Groups in real time. We coined the term 'WhatsAppinars' for these, and these were an instant hit in the groups. The result was simply amazing. The WhatsApp group mentors started preparing a Sunday Morning Master Class in the group. The WhatAppinars were announced beforehand with date and time with speaker and topic in details. The speakers would come online with their presentation and deliver a Typical webinar lecture which

Access this article online

Website:
www.jocr.co.in

DOI:
2250-0685.1280

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would be streamed Live to all WhatsApp groups. The members of the group could watch the WhatsAppinar inside the WhatsApp group itself. The speaker and the audience were finally in one group and after the WhatsAppinar was over the speaker would ask for questions from the Live audience. The audience in the groups can then type their questions and queries in WhatsApp groups and get the response from the speaker in the group itself. A time of one hour is specified for these WhatsAppinars but they would regularly go beyond 2 hours with both audience and the speakers engaged in active discussions across multiple groups. Sometimes these discussions would even go into late evenings.

The first WhatsAppinar ran on 18th Jan 2019 by Dr B Shivashankar on Topic of How to Get Good Results with PFN & Predictors of Successful Outcome [1]. This was relayed on WhatsApp groups and was watched by nearly 400 surgeons online. There was no discussion after the WhatsAppinar, but few questions were put up in the group by audience, and Dr Shivashankar answered them. So the format evolved into having question answers too at the end. Since then 13 WhatsAppinars were held, and thousands of orthopaedic surgeons are involved in it. The most recent one on Hip AVN had 900 surgeons logging in to watch, and discussion spanned across four WhatsApp groups.

This entire WhatsAppinar event can be done at much less cost and can be relayed on to unlimited number of WhatsApp and telegram groups. There is no cap on number of people who can attend it. The end to end encryption of WhatsApp makes it quite safe and secure. It is one of the solutions that can revolutionise the online academic education, especially for countries like India. It will surely have implication in other fields too, and future looks bright for this. Maybe WhatsApp also will come up with the technology for Live streaming inbuilt. We also run an online portal called OrthoTvonline where all these webinars are recorded and can be streamed by members for free, so we urge you to join OrthoTvonline.com today.

We thank all our group members and mentors who regularly participate in our WhatsApp group discussions to make it a lively one. We look forward to working with the latest technology to create online education for Indian orthopaedic Surgeons in a free and simplistic way.

If the readers of JOCR wish to connect to this Orthoverse on WhatsApp, they can send a WhatsApp message to my number +919833110366

Conflict of Interest: Nil
Source of Support: None

How to Cite this Article

Shyam A, Bijlani NWhatsAppinars: A New Way to Online Academic Education. Journal of Orthopaedic Case Reports 2018 Jan-Feb;9(1):Page 1-2