

# Feasibility of eLearning distance course - experience in Continuous Medical Education (CME)

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## AIM OF STUDY

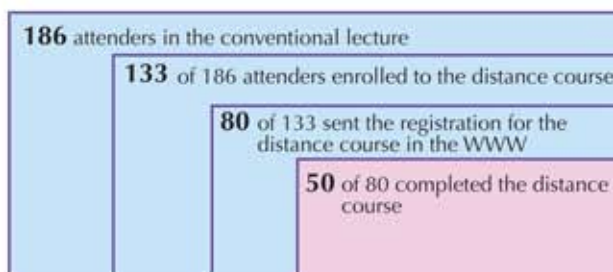
To assess utilization of a four weeks distance course (free, 6 hrs CME) aimed to train the effective use of Medline, and Cochrane library and national EBM databases of Terveystieto, with special attention to following characteristics of eLearning.

- What is the commitment of clinicians to a distant CME course?
- What are the working schedules of clinicians to complete the course?
- What are the working sites (office/home)?
- What is the impact of distant course to clinical use of databases?

Participants were recruited during a 3.5 h-course of informatics in Finnish Medical Convention Jan 2005. We sent advance information in Dec 2004 to maximize the opportunities of participants to utilize the distance course in Jan-Feb 2005.

## COMMITMENT

133 of 186 attenders enrolled to the distance course the Convention, where supplementary study material was given (booklet, CD-ROM).



The average number of visits in the course area in WWW was 17.1. Among trainees, 9.9 working hours (SD 6.5) was reported, 62 % of which was spent in the course WWW course area.

Males were more eager to enroll to the distance course than females (82 % vs. 69 %), but females showed up to the distance course more frequently (65 % vs. 47 %). The proportion of completed achievement of the course was slightly higher among females (66 % vs 57 %)

## Where and when the trainees studied during the distance course

22 % of the trainees (N = 50) who completed the course attended the distance course only during weekends and 34 % only during weekdays.  
32 % of 50 trainees were studying the course entirely at home and 18 % studied entirely at workplace.  
The total working hours among trainees during the distance course was shorter among those who worked entirely or mostly at home than among those who studied the course at workplace. This finding probably can be explained by better availability of databases at workplace.

## Impact of the distance course

Three months later a follow-up questionnaire was conducted to the two groups of trainees; those who completed the distance course (response rate 79 %) and those who did not participate the distance course (response rate 45 %). The subjects were inquired how they considered the impact of attending the training.

Statements*	Fully agree (%)	
	Only conventional lecture (N = 51)	Conventional lectures with distance course (N = 38)
I use the databases more than before	13.7 %	28.6 %
My use of databases is more versatile	21.6 %	62.6 %
I can use search terms more effectively	14.0 %	40.5 %
I can use other search limitations more effectively	16.3 %	36.1 %
I can benefit more from databases in my work	18.0 %	59.5 %

\* The present use of databases compared to the situation before training

## CONCLUSIONS

Compliance to attend distance course was 60 % (80/133). Commitment to complete the programme was 63 % (50/80). Female doctors were slightly more effectively participating and completing the course programme.  
One fifth of trainees studied only during weekends. One third of trainees studied only at home.  
The benefit of a program of conventional lectures (3.5 hrs) seems to be considerably lower compared to a combination of lectures and a distance course containing practical training (3.5 hrs + 10 hrs).