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Letter to the editor

Integrating virtual and light microscopy for oral histology and oral pathology lessons: Indian scenario

We thoroughly agree with the authors Wu YH and Chiang CP opining that virtual microscopy is a better alternative to traditional real microscopy in teaching oral histology to dental students.¹ Although remarkably, majority of the dental teaching institutes in India still use the traditional glass slides and light microscopy during histology tutorials which focuses on identification of the oral tissue structures and reproducing it in schematic diagrams by individual students. Interestingly, the average tutorial time in an institutional set-up is of 2 h, bulk of which is exhausted in imitating the diagrams rather than getting a comprehensive understanding of the minutiae. These illustrations are evaluated by the faculty members thus ensuring a personal rapport with the students which would otherwise be challenging to maintain.

One way to curtail around is by introducing virtual demonstration of tissue sections where the entire slide can be examined and discussed at different magnifications thereby saving valuable time and resources. Recent studies in the literature have shown that students appreciate virtual lessons for both oral histology and oral pathology.^{1–3} Contrariwise, taking photomicrographs for virtual teaching requires expensive and technique sensitive applications with archival features. Perhaps the ideal solution would be a subtle and cautious practice of a hybrid system embracing both virtual and real microscopy where the students can be taught via virtual slides and also be trained in handling and scanning glass slides under light microscopes which would eventually be expected of them in practice.

References

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Received 7 October 2022

Final revision received 11 October 2022

Available online 20 October 2022

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jds.2022.10.009>

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