

The Cloud 2015 Invited Speaker: David Eddy



We are delighted to have David Eddy as an Invited Speaker at the 2015 NZIMRT-AIR Scientific Meeting, with the theme ‘The Cloud: Shaping our Future’, which will be held in Wellington, New Zealand, from 24-26 July 2015.

David is a Teaching Fellow (Distance Learning), part of the Radiotherapy, Oncology & Supportive Care team in

the Faculty of Health & Wellbeing, Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), UK, and will be sharing his insights from the design and implementation of the SHU’s first MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) “Enhancing Prostate Cancer Care”, delivered in collaboration with Prostate Cancer UK and PebblePad.

Can you please share with us a brief outline of your professional background?

I qualified as a Therapy Radiographer in 1982, before moving into education where, after joining SHU in 1991, I helped to design and co-author the SHU’s first undergraduate radiotherapy course.

Between 1987 and 1991, I undertook two research projects aiming to enhance the Professional Body Record of Practical Training, before developing a clinical portfolio and clinical assessment scheme which was unique to SHU. In 2006 I pioneered the use of the PebblePad ePortfolio, now available throughout SHU.

I have been the Course Leader for the BSc (Hons) Therapeutic Radiography (1993-2001) and MSc Radiotherapy & Oncology (2001-2009) programmes, and along with Dr Heidi Probst, spearheaded the introduction of distance learning in the MSc during 2005.

In 2006 along with Angela Eddy, I conceived and developed the CPD Anywhere™ framework, and as a Teaching Fellow (DL) since 2007, I have helped to support, enable and deliver online courses in a range of contexts. I was also co-founder and a past Editor-in-Chief of the international, peer-reviewed *Journal of Radiotherapy in Practice*.

In 2014 I undertook the learning design and was Joint Course Leader (with Cath Holborn) of SHU’s first MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), “Enhancing Prostate Cancer Care” delivered in collaboration with Prostate

Cancer UK and PebblePad, and I am looking forward to sharing what we learned from this during the webinar.

We are happy that you will be able to join us via webcast from the UK – what has motivated you to participate in this Meeting?

I was delighted to be approached as an Invited Speaker and although unfortunately am unable to do so in person, it is perhaps appropriate given the theme of the conference, that I am able to participate virtually through the wonder of the internet and of associated digital tools and software. This is not something I could have envisaged when I was a ‘boy radiographer’ many moons ago!

For the past 10 years or so as an educator I have been working with postgraduate radiotherapy students (and a sprinkling of other allied health professionals, nurses and doctors) exclusively online. These conversations emphasised how much technology continues to inform, shape and impact upon all aspects of their practice (just as we experience in education). Then we compound this by encouraging (in some cases requiring) them to shift their continuing personal and professional development online.

So for me the conference theme resonates significantly and I think it is both timely and appropriate to shine a light on how this is (and will increasingly) impact on the future of our profession and the way in which we practice.

Your presentation will focus on the development of a Massive Open Online Course and the impact this can have on distance learning – please explain more for our readers.

Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs are free, open-access courses made available online, at scale. The term MOOC was coined in 2008 when Canadian academics Stephen Downes and George Siemens hosted a 12-week online course to over 2,000 students without paying and without academic credit. MOOCs allow potentially hundreds of thousands of students to simultaneously participate in a course which is free and open on a global basis. You may be aware of some major MOOC platform providers such as Future Learn (UK) and Coursera.

But, despite the hype, it’s not all or even really about MOOCs - they are simply the totems or standard bearers for a re-frame, re-think and re-purpose of the relationship Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have with the online learning agenda. Learners in the 21st century increasingly expect to be able to exercise choice and a degree of control

over the place, pace and mode of their learning in addition to selecting from a range of 'how to' options for accessing their learning e.g. smart phones, tablets, laptops, PCs etc.

It is in that context I will share some of our thinking, key features of the learning design and experiences of delivering SHU's first MOOC 'Enhancing Prostate Cancer Care'.

What is your view of how health care systems in the UK are keeping up with advancing technology, and are there lessons that can be learned in Australia?

In a sense, it was ever thus. I recall as a student radiographer asking one of those annoying 'why?' questions of a qualified member of staff. The response I received has stayed with me forever – 'We do it like this because we always have.' That has to be the most dangerous phrase in any language.

“Technology should be used to enhance aspects of the services we offer our patients, not to drive or shape it”

Change is the norm in health care and has been for a number of decades now. As health care practitioners we have embraced change, adapted, progressed, evolved and enhanced our practice in response to the challenges advancing technology presented. Initiatives around telemedicine, telehealth and remote monitoring of patients are becoming increasingly prevalent and their success or otherwise will hinge on the training of patients to harness the technology for their benefit, by health care professionals.

The only difference now is the pace of these technological advances. The rate of change is frenetic. For me, the key challenge in health care (as in education) is to ensure the technology remains secondary, invisible as far as possible. Technology should be used to enhance aspects of the services we offer our patients, not to drive or shape it. It's all about the quality of care and the interactions we have with our patients. If the technology can aid or amplify this, then all well and good, if not, don't rush to deploy it. Similarly in education, we strive to make the technology invisible as much as possible so it is an enabler of - not a barrier to - learning.

For me, it's all about 'the conversation' – the sharing of practice, the discussions, defining meaning, floating and refining ideas, co-creating content and solutions etc. This is where the meaningful and deep learning takes place and this is how we support and facilitate practitioners to impact upon practice.

On an individual level, do you have any advice for health practitioners who wish to keep their skill set up to date in order to keep up with changing systems?

In many respects, there has never been a better time to be undertaking CPD as a healthcare practitioner. Internet access provides a portal to a rich plethora of information, resources, packages of learning, courses and support etc, much of which is freely available.

As health care practitioners, you are all connected globally now and the key to remaining up to date and current will largely be determined by your personal learning network - who you are connected with online, how you engage with, harness and utilise that valuable resource via Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook etc is increasingly important. For example, I have been involved in education and training for over 25 years and can honestly say that I have learned more about education and learning through 2 years of being an active Twitter user, than I did in the previous two decades.

Digital literacies in this context are key. It is important you and your leaders invest in these. This is not something you should lack confidence in. Look at all the technology you have to deal with every day of your working life and the skills you have amassed to enable you to utilise this expertly. These are transferable skills which you should be confident of re-deploying in a range of online contexts – formal and informal, personal, social or collaborative.

Finally, don't get hung up on being an expert and having to know everything. There is an old adage which goes something like 'If you don't use it you lose it!' When I trained I had to learn all about the workings of capacitors, transformers etc. I don't think I ever utilised that information in practice, and needless to say I lost it. Important 'stuff' which you utilise every day, you retain, refine and enhance over time. As always, if you don't know, or have a problem, you ask – only now we are globally connected, you have access to so many more people when seeking solutions.

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