Podcasting & iTunesU at the NYU School of Medicine

For nearly 40 years, the NYU School of Medicine has regularly recorded faculty lectures. In 2006, in an effort to keep pace with the evolving technology driving the video and audio lecture recording, students initiated a podcast-recording project. When ALEX (the learning management software also employed by NYU College of Dentistry, see pp. 6-8) was introduced in 2007, it allowed students streamlined, convenient access to these podcasts via iTunesU. This innovation changed the way faculty members taught their courses — and the way medical students learned from them.

Today, all NYU School of Medicine students, faculty, and residents can listen to and download over 1,500 of these podcasts from over 300 faculty members. Half of the recordings are in mp3 format. Half are full-video lectures, featuring audio tracks accompanied by screencasts of the lecture slides. Almost all are 40-60 minutes long. On average, students download 1,400 podcasts a week.

Multiple Methods

While most NYU School of Medicine podcasts are recorded during class lectures, others are recorded ahead of time. Some faculty members record themselves on their computers. They then upload their podcasts to iTunesU before class so students can download and listen to them beforehand. Instead of using class time for the lecture, they are able to use that hour for small-group exercises or simulations.

Podcasting Benefits Both Faculty and Students

NYU School of Medicine students and faculty have hectic schedules, which is why the ability to capture and revisit lectures via podcasts is especially valuable. Podcasts free up classroom time, allowing learners to go through the lecture at the pace that best suits their study needs. Additionally, students can access iTunesU 24 hours a day to download any podcasts they need. Many transfer them to mp3 players for later listening.

Dr. Marc Triola, the Director of the Division of Educational Informatics, oversees the use of educational technology and educational informatics research and development for the NYU School of Medicine and Graduate Training Programs. In his opinion, podcasting is immensely valuable. "Because students and faculty are rarely in one place at one time," Dr. Triola observes, "the asynchronous nature of podcasts helps us deliver learning content to the classroom, the dorm room, and the bedside. It empowers the students by offering improved access to their learning materials."

The Future

Podcasting at the NYU School of Medicine is still a relatively young practice, and Dr. Triola sees great promise in it. "I think the next step here for podcasting is that soon, the recordings will become a primary means for delivering didactics, and classroom and lab contact time will be reserved more for smaller group problem-solving or simulation exercises."

— Dana Rasso