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Virtually possible

I must confess to being a bit of a sceptic with regard to the huge sums of money currently being invested in eHealth and mHealth solutions to Africa's health communication challenges. Don't get me wrong, I don't disapprove of the spend, or think that good cannot come from it, I just feel that funders have lost perspective on reality for the majority of African physicians or nurses or ancillary health workers for whom good old pHealth (my term for paper-based journals and books) still remain the gold standard for study and learning. Computers and mobiles undoubtedly offer fantastic new opportunities, but in my experience, especially for CPD, a paper source remains the medium of choice for most people. In time that will change, but that time is still not here because slow access doesn't encourage old habits to die out easily!

So it is with a degree of trepidation that I wish to introduce you to the first Africa Health Webinar on Medical Education which takes place over the galactic ether on Thursday 24th May at 1500hrs GMT (see pages 14 and 15 of this issue). We are grateful to the Laureate International Universities for sponsoring the event and providing the software platform. I'm sure in some places it will work supremely well, but no doubt in others it might prove a challenge. But I am much looking forward to giving it a go, and we are very pleased that Dr Francis Omaswa has agreed to give the keynote address under the provisional title: 'Can medical education in Africa become fit for purpose?'

It promises to be a really interesting debate and there is no one better qualified than Francis to provide the keynote. He's criss-crossed the continent in the last couple of years mapping training institutions and examining curricula. Couple that to his detailed knowledge of the Human Resources for Health issues in Africa, and you would be hard pressed to find anyone with a better perspective on the issues. It is likely we will broadcast (or should that be cybercast) it from the World Health Assembly in Geneva, so hopefully we will be able to pick up a few 'eminent others' with key opinions and views to join the panel. But the litmus test for success will be how many of our readers in Africa are able to join up and actively participate in the process. If maybe 100 people join up from 15 different countries, just think what the cost of travel would have been had it been a real conference session. So if you have an interest in medical education, I look forward to welcoming you, and to hearing how well the process works.

If it is positive, then maybe we should look at coordinating more webinar's on a diverse range of topics. Does this constitute wHealth I wonder...? Best wishes.

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