An Information Retrieval Training Tool Targeting the PBL Students at the University of Liege

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Objective:To provide the medical students involved in Problem-Based Learning (PBL) with a remotely accessible training tool for the retrieval of relevant information.

Content: The training tool is accessed trough a portal web site. It is centred on a clinical theoretical case to be solved by the students. They are then oriented to a selection of electronic resources (e.g. dictionaries, encyclopaedias, textbooks, and bibliographical databases).

Each resource comes with examples of search strategies developed by the library staff in the context of the clinical problem. Each step of the strategy is described, commented and illustrated with a screen copy of the original resource. To reinforce the realism, students have to click on areas of the screen copy to navigate through the search strategy. A catalogue is created with the documents retrieved from the searches. The catalogue is searchable independently and provides links to full-text when available.

The technical support for the training tool consists of a set of related databases (FileMaker Pro, FileMaker Inc., USA). Data concerning the clinical case, including medical imaging, is contained in a first database. Description, basic user instructions and links to resources are collected in a second database. For every example of search strategy in a specific resource, one database is created from a template, containing all the search terms and screen copies necessary to provide an interactive demonstration. The catalogue of documents constitutes the last database.

In late 2002, the prototype will be presented to teachers and students and evaluated for quality, performance and user-friendliness. Results will help us to improve the design and content of the training tool.