



## Are Online platforms the new classrooms?

The year 2020 has been nothing less than a year of changing norms in all aspects of life and dentistry has been no different. The entire teaching platform has shifted from actual to virtual mode of teaching thereby opening up a world full of possibilities in terms of access to learning materials. Though purists may argue that nothing supplements a good classroom session and though I partly agree to it, my point of view is a good teacher can teach anywhere be it actual or virtual and the same goes for students too who are keen to learn.

Though the faculty aren't tech savvy, they have taken all the possible efforts to make sure the students learning process doesn't suffer. There have been numerous global education platforms that have provide access to free webinars from stalwarts thereby believing in the age old adage that sharing is caring. As COVID 19 seems likely to be around for some time, the question to be asked is once things return to normalcy post COVID-19, will contact lectures still be popular or people would prefer to access contents online.

Though I have made use of my forced home arrest during the covid times by attending multiple webinars on varied topics of dental discipline, I somehow at the end of it still feel a lacuna in the connect the speaker establishes with his audience through an online platform compared to a contact session.

Add to that the numerous distractions that come forth your way in the form of phone calls, mails, messages and clearly there is a loss of focus. I also noticed that a lot of the speakers who develop such an excellent rapport with the audience in a contact session could not replicate the same mojo online and as a teacher who engages a hundred students in a classroom, I fully empathize with them.

Having said that, I also enjoyed how speakers we could only dream of hearing and seeing were right across our screens giving us a wealth of information which otherwise would have cost us a lot of money for free or at a reasonable price. Everybody irrespective of their age or experience tuned in to hear the masters preach their work and words of wisdom.

In my personal opinion, a healthy blend of online and contact mode is the way forward for sometime at least till a semblance of sanity is seen regarding control of COVID 19 spread. Online modes are the way forward if sessions are made more interactive with quizzes and various online engagement tools making sure that the user is tuned in to the content.

Till then let us hope things turn out for the better and there is an improvement in the situation as seen

Dr.Umesh Y Pai