

# Letters

## RESEARCH LETTER

### Use of Streaming Media (YouTube) as an Educational Tool for Surgeons—A Survey of AAFPRS Members

Staying current with a rapidly evolving pool of knowledge and surgical techniques is a challenge for all practicing surgeons. Traditionally, resources such as medical journals and meetings have helped surgeons keep abreast of new findings, but these remain a poor substitute for hands-on training. With the advent of online streaming media, surgeons have a new resource for acquiring techniques that is more interactive than book-reading and more accessible than training with an expert. Herein, we seek to determine the extent to which the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS) membership uses online streaming media and their opinions on this novel tool for continuing postgraduate education.

**Methods** | An online survey was designed using SurveyMonkey.com and emailed to all 2700 members of the AAFPRS. Respondents were asked about their sources for learning new technical and nontechnical skills, their experience with online streaming media, the techniques they had learned through this medium, whether they had used these methods in practice, and their interest in an online video library for facial plastic surgery. Demographic data (sex, length of time in practice, practice type, and fellowship training) were also collected. Results were organized and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. The impact of fellowship completion and having more than 10 years of practice experience was assessed using a *t* test.

**Results** | We received 202 responses, representing 8.0% of the AAFPRS membership. The cohort was well-balanced in terms of experience and practice demographics (Table).

The most popular ways to stay current with nontechnical and technical findings included meetings, journals, and discussions with colleagues (Figure). Of the respondents, 64.1% indicated they had used online media at least once to learn a new technique, especially in the areas of rhinoplasty and injectable procedures, with 83.1% subsequently applying these techniques to their practice; 89.9% indicated they would be likely to use an online video library, and 60.0% expressed willingness to pay for this service.

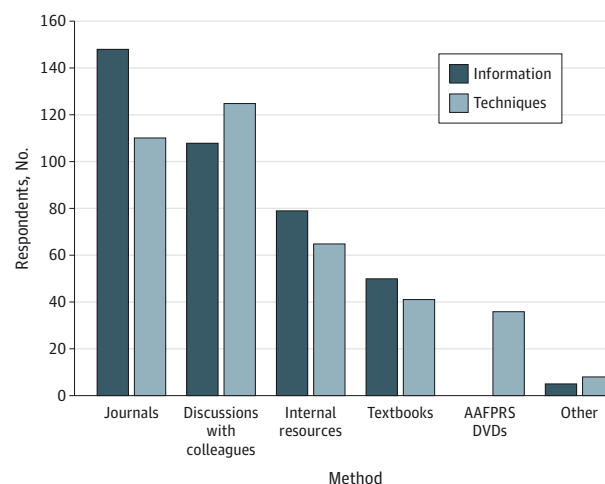
Fellowship training did not affect methods for obtaining information or interest in an online library, but respondents who were not fellowship-trained were more likely to use AAFPRS DVDs to learn new techniques ( $P = .03$ ) and more willing to pay an access fee for an online library ( $P = .03$ ). Length of experience was inversely correlated with prior usage of online streaming media (82.4% of less experienced surgeons vs 54.0% of more experienced respondents;  $P < .001$ ), although it did not affect interest in an online library. Less experienced

Table. Demographics of the 202 Survey Respondents

Characteristic	Percentage <sup>a</sup>
Sex	
Male	90.9
Female	9.1
Fellowship-trained	
Yes	72.3
No	27.7
Years of experience in practice	
0-10	36.1
11-20	28.7
≥21	35.1
Type of practice	
Private, solo	40.6
Private, partnership	22.3
Private, multispecialty	10.9
Academic medicine	25.7

<sup>a</sup> Percentages may not total 100% in each category owing to rounding.

Figure. Methods Indicated for Learning New Information and New Surgical Techniques in Facial Plastic Surgery



AAFPRS indicates American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

respondents were also more likely to rely on textbooks rather than discussions with colleagues for new information ( $P = .01$ ).

**Discussion** | Videos have long been used in surgical education, but freely obtainable streaming media (ie, YouTube) provide a widely available tool to learn new techniques. While there is literature on the use of YouTube for trainee and patient education,<sup>1-6</sup> there is little focus on its value for

practicing surgeons. In our study, we found that most AAFPRS members have previously used online streaming media, especially those less than 10 years out of training who may be more familiar with online information technology. Almost all respondents, regardless of fellowship or practice experience, expressed interest in an online library of surgical technique videos.

The enthusiasm is not unbridled, however. The Internet's ease of access has raised concerns regarding the quality of these sources.<sup>1,5,6</sup> These concerns were echoed by Al-Khatib<sup>1</sup> in his discussion of an online information network, and he suggested the establishment of a "private channel" with professional supervision. This proposal could be applied to the AAFPRS in establishing a "living document" of surgical videos open only to paying members. This library would provide surgeons with an accessible but also reliable mine of information to enhance future education.

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