

Expanding the Reach and Relevance of Continuing Medical Education in the Philippines: Reflections on the UP Med Webinars

The UP Med Webinars, as a national platform for continuing medical education (CME), mark a significant change in how Filipino doctors access lifelong learning. Marcelo et al. have documented the journey of this initiative, from an alumni-led project to a mainstay of digital CME in the country.¹ This platform is responsive to the unique needs of Filipino health workers, especially those in underserved and remote areas.

A unique feature of the UP Med Webinars is its organizational structure: a rotating leadership anchored on the UP College of Medicine (UPCM) silver jubilarian class. This mobilizes a huge alumni network, ensures continuity of leadership, and infuses fresh ideas every year. It also distributes the financial and logistical burden across generations of alumni, making it more sustainable. Alumni engagement, particularly through volunteering and sustained involvement, has been shown to strengthen institutional relationships and support long-term academic development.²

A strength of the UP Med Webinars is its inclusivity. Free, CPD-accredited sessions available on mobile devices—even on “piso-WiFi” in sari-sari stores—the program went beyond technological barriers. Such design considerations are crucial in a country where many areas are geographically isolated and disadvantaged. Unlike traditional CME formats, these webinars addressed logistical and opportunity costs, so doctors can learn without leaving their clinics or disrupting patient care. This is in line with studies that e-learning can alleviate the burden of health worker shortages and deliver education in low- and middle-income countries.³

The role of social media in promoting UP Med Webinars is a textbook example of digital engagement. With over 64,000 followers on Facebook and strategic use of live streaming, QR registration codes, and interactive features, the webinars created a dynamic and inclusive online learning environment. This aligns with international literature that states that social media can enhance learner engagement, especially among digitally native professionals.⁴

And the shift to the UP Manila Zoom platform and a private Facebook group during the pandemic is good digital governance while maintaining interactivity with the audience.

The inability to evaluate and assess learning and clinical impact is one of the limitations in evaluating educational results. Longitudinal evaluations may be used in the future to tackle this problem. Regional medical schools can also include these webinars in their official continuing medical education programs to enhance learning and application. Online CME has been shown to improve clinicians’ clinical competency and performance.⁵

Additionally, just-in-time training modules, clinical decision support, and personalized learning pathways may become available through integration with telehealth and electronic medical record (EMR) systems, which is being facilitated by initiatives led by the Asia eHealth Information Network and the National Telehealth Center.

The UP Med Webinars illustrate how stakeholder-led and context-driven digital education can overcome barriers related to discipline, finances, and geography. This initiative sets a high standard for creativity, inclusivity, and adaptability as digital technologies become increasingly integrated into medical education and health service delivery in the Philippines.

The following chapter must focus on comprehensive evaluation, systematic curricular integration, and international scalability without compromising the grassroots spirit that made it effective. By doing this, it can serve as a model for CME in the Philippines and other resource-constrained regions worldwide.



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