poorer access to services in rural areas⁸ is probably a global problem. In the end, it is the injured person who must negotiate a lifelong journey with a brain injury. Their perspective needs to be understood.

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Launching BMJ Masterclasses

Sign up now for masterclasses and discussion forums that will light your fire

When we ask our readers what they want more of, one of the first things that they say is: education.¹ This has led to the development of the ABC series of books and to BMJ Learning—which now has more than 50 000 registered users. These products help meet the needs of those who like to learn in their own workplace and home.² However, many of our users have said that they learn best at face to face meetings. To meet their needs, our next learning product is BMJ Masterclasses, a series of one day courses throughout the United Kingdom. The initial masterclasses will be in respiratory medicine and cardiology and will be aimed primarily at consultants and specialist registrars in these specialties and in general internal medicine. General practitioners with a special interest in these areas will also be welcome.

Among the many courses that are out there, what makes BMJ Masterclasses special? We did some market research on what makes a good course and the messages were clear: learners want a blend of excellent content delivered by world class speakers and also an opportunity to interact with their peers. We agree that the most important feature of any learning initiative is the learning content. In this regard we have aimed high. We are delighted that Roger Hall, editor of *Heart*, and Wisia Wedzicha, professor of respiratory medicine at University College London, have helped us to develop the courses and to recruit the best possible speakers. Our speakers are passionate about their subject and are good on the podium, and they are also keen to network with learners. And we will strive for the content to be evidence based rather than opinion based. The speakers will say how to put the evidence into practice and explain what best to do when the evidence is not strong enough to guide decisions or if it is lacking altogether. They will also critically appraise the latest guidelines and give updates on common dilemmas.

But good speakers are only half the battle.^{3,4} The main learning resource throughout the day will be the audience. To help the learners engage with each other, the courses will include workshops and question and answer sessions throughout the day. All the days will be rounded off with a lecture and workshop on how to get published; experienced staff from our journals will run the workshops.

Learning theory tells us that any one-off educational event is unlikely to have long term effects unless

the clinicians who are attending have adequate time to prepare themselves for the event and also have adequate follow-up. We are encouraging delegates to submit questions and clinical dilemmas in advance of the day: we will collate these and will encourage our speakers to try to answer these questions. We will also encourage learners to sign up to BMJ Learning discussion forums so that they can stay in touch with each other and perhaps discuss certain issues further online. We will also evaluate the courses and try to provide for any unmet learning needs by commissioning further masterclasses or by commissioning online learning modules on BMJ Learning. Our long term aim is to produce a series of masterclasses covering a wide range of clinical topics and also non-clinical topics such as leadership.

We want the masterclasses to truly light a fire within and to leave learners with a desire and enthusiasm to put what they have learnt into practice. We also want them to feel inspired to look at their ongoing learning needs and feel as though the seeds have been sown for further self development. We now have a wider range of educational tools to help them to do this. But this series of masterclasses is just a pilot. We have learned a great deal so far and hope to learn a great deal more from the initial series. We want to find out from you if you think that we have missed something in the pilot or whether we should do a further masterclass in your specialty. The BMJ Masterclasses in cardiology and respiratory medicine will run in London, Edinburgh, and Birmingham in February, March, and April 2006. Registration is quick and easy: go to bmjmasterclasses.com. We would be delighted to see you there.

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