

Virtual doctors provide bedside education

BY JOHN GEORGE
STAFF WRITER

CHERRY HILL — Dr. Michael S. Feldman is on a quest to improve how medical students are trained and doctors continue learning.



Feldman

The practicing cardiologist and professor of medicine at Drexel University College of Medicine leads a foundation that is attempting to tackle both tasks.

The Graduate Education Foundation, or GEF, a nonprofit organization based in South Jersey, has developed an independent, Internet-based continuing medical education product called Grand Rounds Online.

Feldman hopes that revenue from the online product will be sufficient to award master teacher grants that would be used to develop and enhance clinical skills and bedside-education programs at the medical school and post-graduate residency levels.

“Bedside teaching and mentoring is where you work individually with students and really teach them how to think like a doctor,” Feldman said. “It’s one thing to have the knowledge, but it’s another thing to access information from patients and put it all together to figure out the best way to treat somebody.”

With reimbursement rates from the government and private insurers declining, Feldman said, bedside-education and mentoring programs are rapidly disappearing. He said neither medical schools nor physicians — who in the past would voluntarily serve as mentors —

The screenshot shows the homepage of CMElectures.org. At the top, it says 'GRADUATE EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRESENTS' and 'CMElectures.org ACCREDITED ONLINE LEARNING FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS'. There are navigation links for HOME, ABOUT US, NEWS, AUTHORS, and LECTURES. The main headline is '"Grand Rounds Online" - on YOUR time, on YOUR terms. Interactive Multimedia CME Lectures Authored by Leading Physician-Educators'. Below this, there are several text boxes: one describing the 'Grand Rounds' format, another stating 'A new and unique tool is now available for busy health care professionals...', and a third mentioning 'These interactive multimedia, broadcast-quality clinical presentations...'. There are also three buttons for 'Institutional programs for hospitals, residency programs and medical schools', 'Special programs for medical societies', and 'Individual subscription options'. On the right side, there is a 'LOG-IN' section with fields for 'User Name:' and 'Password:', and a 'Log-In' button. Below the login section, there is a 'Preview up to 3 lectures of your choice right now!' offer. At the bottom, there is a copyright notice for 2006 Graduate Education Foundation, Inc., and a statement that the activity is accredited by the ACCME.

Revenue from the online lecture series will fund master teacher grants.

have the time or resources to commit to bedside education.

“Practicing physicians who donated their time in the past no longer have the luxury of additional time that’s not used for earning income,” he said.

GEF was established in 2002 through a \$2.5 million, five-year grant from the Philadelphia Health Care Trust. The trust has subsequently provided an additional \$2 million in support to the foundation. Strategic Health Alliance, a Cherry Hill health-care consulting firm, manages the foundation.

Much of the foundation’s current activities are tied to promoting and enhancing the online continuing medical education product.

Unlike the majority of CME program operators, the foundation operates

completely independent of special interest funding — including support from pharmaceutical companies or medical device manufacturers.

The teaching series features more than 140 accredited online lectures covering a broad range of medical and surgical topics. The programs are broken up into 18 areas of specialty including pain management, cardiology, rheumatology/arthritis, pediatrics and emergency medicine.

Jo Surpin, GEF’s president and the head of Strategic Health Alliance, said one of the best features of the Grand Rounds Online series is that unlike traditional CME courses, which are often offered in hotels and conference centers, the foundation’s Web-based “classroom” can be accessed at any time from the Internet.

“Nothing this comprehensive has ever

DOCTORS: Classes suit time-starved docs

been available for health-care professionals,” Feldman said. “The ability to have available at their fingertips a clinical information library and an online educational resource for day-to-day support is invaluable.”

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Michael S. Feldman
Drexel University
College of Medicine

All lectures are accredited through the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education and Drexel University College of Medicine.

The cost for subscribing to the online service, which is continually updated, is \$14.95 for the first month and \$24.95 a month thereafter.

Among the doctors contributing lectures is Dr. David Nash, founder and chairman of the department of health policy at Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University.

Nash produced a five-lecture symposium focused on practice-based learning and system-based skills.

“I was very happy they were interested in the issues I am devoted to,” he said.

Nash, who is also a member of the foundation’s medical board of advisers, was impressed by the digital production techniques the foundation is using to produce high-quality lectures online.

“They have an opportunity to reach a very broad audience,” he said. “One of the challenges will be doctors have a lot of opportunities to get CME credits. There are in-person meetings, national meetings and even credit they can get by reading a medical journal article. There’s a lot of competition for doctors’ eyeballs.”

Surpin said the foundation’s strategy for marketing Grand Rounds Online is to work with state and local medical societies.

“For the societies, it allows them to enhance their membership benefits and complement their existing CME activities,” she said. “Most of the medical societies haven’t been able to offer any kind of online components because it’s so expensive to do.”

Surpin said the foundation gets a “seal of approval” from the medical society for the product.

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Jo Surpin
Graduate Education
Foundation

“Doctors get so inundated with materials,” she said. “When something comes from a reputable source they are more likely to open it.”

The foundation has formed alliances with

statewide medical societies in Connecticut and New Jersey and with the Philadelphia County Medical Society.



Surpin

“We are committed to offering physicians the latest in Web-based technology,” said Dr. Irving P. Ratner, president of the Institute of Medicine and Public Health of New Jersey Inc., a nonprofit organization established by the Medical Society of New Jersey.

of New Jersey.

Ratner said the online lecture series provides the society’s New Jersey doctors with not only a way to enhance their professional education, but also with an “instantaneously available library” of clinical information that is a resource in their day-to-day practice.

Surpin believes the foundation’s greatest challenge is getting physicians to pay for subscriptions.

“Doctors want unbiased material, but they don’t want to pay for it,” she said.

Physicians in this region are also a little spoiled for choice.

“With five medical schools, doctors can find experts walking down the hallway,” Surpin said. “But when you go to other parts of Pennsylvania or other places across the country, you don’t have that. What we can do is bring that expertise right into a physician’s office or his or her living room.”

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