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E-learning and occupational therapy education. From design to evaluation.

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Due to the raising flexibility of the curriculum, students are able to enter later in the program. Therefore in some cases they have to study courses on their own. One of these courses is, "Introduction to Scientific Research". The evaluation of the students indicated that it was too hard to study this course on their own. Therefore an e-learning tool was designed by using software called Soft Chalk ©. A first step in the development of the e-learning was to get to know the possibilities of this software. Secondly, literature was consulted to point out the technical, didactic and content characteristics of a qualitative web based course. Thirdly, extra information, examples and possible exercises were added to the course. The result is an interactive e-learning tool with lots of examples, links and exercises related to occupational therapy and scientific research. The web based training offers the students several advantages: they are able to use the course whenever and wherever they want, they get feedback in real time on their learning process and they can unlimited access and repeat the course based on their own needs. In January 2009 the course was put into practice for the first time. An oral and digital evaluation by the students indicated that the e-learning offers an attractive way of learning the course objectives. However, the students found it rather difficult reading the text on the computer than reading their textbook. Nevertheless, the students appreciated the links, extra information and exercises included in the web based course. Going forward, the content should continuously be adapted to the preferences of the students and current occupational therapy topics.

There is a general trend to increase flexibility in education. Therefore, an e-learning tool can be an ideal teaching method and a way of meeting the current need to approach the new generation of students with the basic principle of occupational therapy: the 'client-centered' vision. This means that we should approach this 'google-generation' with new teaching techniques, related to relevant culture goods for them. Only by this approach our knowledge transfer will keep on reaching the students.