

# Family Medicine Residents Teaching in Virtual Settings: Opportunities Despite the Challenges

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## CONTEXT

- Family Medicine (FM) residency programs in Canada must provide teaching opportunities to their trainees (accreditation requirement).
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, much teaching has been virtual.
- Virtual settings present benefits and challenges to FM resident teachers.

## OBJECTIVE

To describe the benefits and challenges of teaching in virtual settings, as perceived by FM residents.

When you're in person, it's just so much easier to stay engaged.

-- Year 1 resident

## METHODS

- Qualitative descriptive study.
- Semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews with FM residents.
- Interviews were digitally-recorded and transcribed verbatim.
- Findings were analyzed using thematic analysis by investigators individually and then collectively as a group.
- Coding template was created and updated in an iterative manner after each interview was analyzed.

### PARTICIPANTS:

Ten FM residents at Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta.

### OUTCOMES MEASURES:

Participants identified both benefits and challenges of the virtual teaching opportunities that they experienced during their FM residency program.

## RESULTS

- Benefits of Virtual Teaching:
  - Comfortable to teach from familiar environment (e.g., home).
  - Less stage fright as compared to in-person settings.
  - Greater accessibility to teaching sessions, especially for learners.
  - Ease of sharing resources via electronic links.
- Challenges of Virtual Teaching:
  - Difficulty gauging learner engagement.
  - Technical challenges.
  - Distractions from learners' environment that would not be encountered in-person. (e.g., people/pets/noise in background).

I think maybe one of the positive things with Zoom is if someone says oh I've got a great resource that I use for this and they can just send it in the chat, like send a PDF of the resource.

-- Year 2 resident

I get less stage fright. I think it disconnects you a little bit more from the audience members and you only worry about how you look from, you know, the waist up.

-- Year 2 resident

I think for a lot of people, they may not have the space to be able to be in a private setting to do a video conference, and I think that might be a barrier.

-- Year 1 resident

Definitely internet connection I thought was a barrier. So some people had like varying levels of internet connectivity and it would sometimes crash.

-- Year 1 resident

Benefits, for sure, being at home in your own comfortable setting and being really accessible so you don't have to travel anywhere, didn't have to worry about getting to a specific place and like buying lunch and things like that.

-- Year 1 resident

## CONCLUSIONS

- Virtual teaching affords some conveniences as described by the participants.
- FM resident teachers need to consider:
  - Strategies to engage learners virtually.
  - Overcoming challenges encountered in virtual teaching environment.
- Virtual platforms are an emerging setting in which FM residents can effectively offer teaching.