

## ONLINE EDUCATION AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR NEONATOLOGY

M. Hall<sup>1,2</sup>, S. Smith<sup>3</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>Neonatology, Princess Anne Hospital, <sup>2</sup>Child Health, <sup>3</sup>University of Southampton, Southampton, UK*

The specialty of neonatology is one of the last bastions of “whole body medicine”. Given the breadth of the subject and the fast-moving scientific and governance developments which are now occurring, the provision of up-to-date education and training for both doctors-in-training and qualified specialists poses a major challenge for all service-based and academic institutions. Traditional “face-to-face” educational provision no longer meet the needs of all of the current generation of trainees and specialists, whose personal and professional commitments may limit their capacity to attend formal educational programmes and events, particularly those which facilitate interaction with colleagues from different national and cultural backgrounds.

Over the past decade the Leonardo programme of the European Commission has funded three pilot projects designed to provide internet-based interactive postgraduate education in neonatology for both doctors-in-training and qualified specialists. To date, more than 200 doctors from 23 countries have participated in the programmes, many of whom have been willing to subject themselves to formative assessment. Evaluations have shown that there is a significant demand for this form of educational provision for both trainees and existing neonatal and paediatric specialists. In addition to the up-to-date scientific and clinical educational material, the format has promoted networking and sharing of practice among professionals from a wide-range of economic and cultural settings. It appears that there is a demand for this format of postgraduate education which has the potential to encourage neonatal practice to cross national and cultural boundaries and to facilitate movement of the medical workforce between countries.