

A NEW CURRICULUM



A look at some of the digital solutions enhancing learning today.

BY CHRIS CHO, BA; BRIAN M. SHAFER, MD; AND CAROLLINE MENEZES



CLUBHOUSE

By Chris Cho, BA, and Brian M. Shafer, MD

Exposing medical students to ophthalmology and its thought leaders is challenging at best and, in some regards, can seem nearly impossible. At many institutions, ophthalmology is not a required portion of the clinical curriculum. Add in a global pandemic, and the opportunities for medical students to obtain valuable experience and mentorship in the field become scarcer.

WHAT IT IS

Spring of 2020 gave rise to a new social media app called Clubhouse, an invitation-only, audio-based platform that allows people to connect with others across the globe. Early on, the app had just a few thousand users, mostly Silicon Valley tech workers and venture capitalists who wanted to connect with one another during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the number of users is in the millions, ranging from high-profile celebrities like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg to everyday people.



HOW IT WORKS

Clubhouse users enter the platform and join a specific room. Rooms are divided into two groups: the speakers and the audience. Participants can see a list of everyone in the room, and audiences can grow into the thousands by having speakers and audience members use the ping function to invite friends into rooms (Figure). A moderator oversees discussions and has the ability to elevate audience members to the stage, where they can speak or remove disrespectful speakers. When the moderators all leave the room, the conversation officially ends. A big difference between Clubhouse and other social media platforms is that the discussions are not recorded; what happens in a Clubhouse room stays in a Clubhouse room.

Within the Clubhouse app, users can create clubs focused on a topic of their choice. Currently, Eye Care Connect is the largest ophthalmology club, with a combined 1,500 members and followers. Within this club, numerous sessions are held. For example, Equinox Presents was a limited series hosted by

Dr. Shafer, Bindu Manne, and Gary Berman. Each expert-led segment focuses on a specific topic, such as forming a niche with Ed Holland, MD;

taking an idea to market with John Berdahl, MD; social media in medicine with Dagny Zhu, MD, and Vicki Chan, MD; and space medicine with astronaut Tim Kopra. What is so valuable in sessions like these is the ability for audience members to engage with such influential leaders.

Eye Tea is the second-largest ophthalmology club on Clubhouse, with a combined 1,800 members and followers. With a focus on evolving technologies and current topics in vision, Eye Tea has hosted several prominent speakers in ophthalmology, including National Eye Institute Director Michael F. Chiang, MD; Uday Degvan, MD; and Thomas Oetting, MD. Both Eye Tea and Eye Care Connect provide valuable opportunities for medical

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students to interact with leaders in the field.

BENEFITS FOR PHYSICIAN TRAINEES

There are a number of advantages to using Clubhouse. The audio chat room is like a live, interactive, unfiltered podcast where the boundary between presenter and listener is blurred. Small rooms have an intimate feel and enable audience members to connect with the speakers, some of whom may be leaders in their field. Clubhouse allows listeners to obtain access to expert knowledge that might normally be out of reach. Although the thought of being a speaker may be anxiety-provoking for the passive listener, there are many opportunities to practice

speaking on the platform.

Studies have demonstrated that medical students suffer from a lack of exposure to ophthalmology in their training.¹⁻² Whereas most social media platforms focus on the presentation of visual content, Clubhouse promotes direct verbal interaction between trainees and experts. This avenue can be especially helpful for medical students without a home institution program or international medical graduates who do not have the opportunity to build relationships with faculty. In fact, there have even been rooms hosted by recently matched fourth-year medical students to help provide insight to future medical school applicants.

Clubhouse has provided a novel

opportunity for medical students interested in ophthalmology. The app allows students to network just as easily with leaders in the field as with one another. Clubhouse emerged at a time of widespread social isolation, when personal connection was limited. Time will tell whether the appetite for virtual connection persists as in-person educational and networking opportunities begin to resume. For now, students looking for connections, mentorship, collegiality, and pearls of wisdom should be encouraged to join the conversation on Clubhouse.

1. Moxon NR, Goyal A, Giaconii JA, et al. The state of ophthalmology medical student education in the United States: an update. *Ophthalmology*. 2020;127(11):1451-1453.

2. Quillen DA, Harper RA, Haik BG. Medical student education in ophthalmology: crisis and opportunity. *Ophthalmology*. 2005; 112(11):1867-1868.



YOUNGMD CONNECT

By Caroline Menezes

The COVID-19 pandemic created many new challenges for individuals pursuing an ophthalmology education, one being the ability to develop relationships with ophthalmologists whom they admire. This moment in history required us all to search for and adapt to new ways of connecting with one another. One new avenue that has allowed for such connection is YoungMD Connect (Bryn Mawr Communications).

SCANNING QR CODES

Open the smartphone or tablet camera app, center the QR code in the viewfinder, and tap the notification to open the link.

WHAT IT IS

YoungMD Connect is an online mentorship and educational forum for aspiring and young ophthalmologists. The platform is, in part, designed to help foster new connections, and preserve existing ones, among medical students, residents, fellows, ophthalmologists, administrators, and industry members within the eye care community.

HOW IT WORKS

A variety of mentoring sessions and educational workshops are available through the membership-based platform, allowing members to listen to and engage with leaders in the field. Having this dedicated time and forum for mentorship has helped me to not only learn about innovative treatment approaches but also to grow professionally and personally, exceeding my expectations of how interinstitutional collaborations can work.

BENEFITS FOR PHYSICIAN TRAINEES

Although I have been a member for only a short time, I have already discovered many valuable perspectives and effective tools through the YoungMD Connect community. A few insights in particular resonated with me.

- “Make it about everybody else during [the] first few years of practice; understand the roles and rhythms of the practice because [it is important not] to disrupt that ... from the start.” —Blake K. Williamson, MD, MPH | In a recent mentoring session, Dr. Williamson noted that, when visiting different institutions or during one's initial

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YoungMD>Connect

PODCASTS



Several educational podcasts have launched to enable listeners to learn whenever and wherever is best for them. Common listening platforms include Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Stitcher, Amazon Music, iHeartRadio, and Eyetube. As crowdsourced on Twitter, some favorite programs include the following:

Ophthalmology off the Grid | Hosted by Blake K. Williamson, MD, MPH

The Second Look | Hosted by Ben LaHood, MD

GT: The Podcast and **CRST: The Podcast**

Ophthalmology Against the Rule | Hosted by Ben LaHood, MD, and Nick Andrew, MD

Cell & Flare | Hosted by Arjan Hura, MD

Eyes 4 Ears | Hosted by Ben Young, MD, and Andrew Pouw, MD

Quicksand Chronicles | Hosted by Elizabeth Yeu, MD, and Nicole Fram, MD

Pupil Pod | Hosted by Sila Bal, MD, MPH

The Uveitis Podcast | Hosted by Akshay Thomas, MD, and Laura Kopplin, MD

Eye Care Out Loud | Hosted by Darrell White, MD

As Seen From Here | Hosted by Joshua A. Young, MD

The Lens Pod | Hosted by Chris Le, Anne Xuan-Lan Nguyen, Sunil Ruparelia, and Emily Xu

Honestly Bilal | Hosted by Bilal Ahmed, MD

JAMA Ophthalmology Author Interviews

Straight From the Cutter's Mouth | Hosted by Jay Sridhar, MD

(Special thanks to @actualpatrick, @cho_junsang, @humoroussaqueous, @DZEyeMD, and @CherieEyeMD)



days as a resident or fellow, it is important to familiarize oneself with the schedule of that provider and the nuances of the practice setting. When given the opportunity, a trainee should make their interests known and share their unique skill sets, as doing so could benefit them in building their careers.

- “Life throws curveballs; establish what is important and be flexible with the other things. [Trainees] need support, but give [they should give themselves] a pass emotionally.” —Julie Schallhorn, MD, MS | Dr. Schallhorn reminded YoungMD Connect members that hardships and challenges are bound to occur, but acting with integrity and being true to oneself will help

in the face of adversity. She advised trainees to remain open to new approaches and to get comfortable with unexpected realities in order to be better prepared for every possible scenario encountered.

- “Always be true to yourself and be allies for each other.” —Cathleen McCabe, MD | I found this advice from Dr. McCabe to be particularly poignant because it aligns with my core values. Ophthalmology has a powerful and transformative role in medicine as a specialty that can directly affect a patient’s quality of life. As we trainees carve out our own paths, we can pay it forward by helping others along the way—a beautiful notion of a continuous cycle of appreciation. ■

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