

WEBSITE REVIEW: WORLDMAPPER

Dear Sir,

Maps are a powerful way to understand the world. The human brain interprets visual data more easily than data presented by other modalities. The earth is actually spherical and the method of representing a sphere on a flat two-dimensional surface is called projection. The projection system used in most maps was developed by Gerardus Mercator in the 16th century. This projection stretches the earth's surface to the most extreme extent and hence introduces the greatest visual bias. Area is drawn in expanding proportion to how near an area is to the poles.

Worldmapper is a collection of world maps where territories are resized on each map according to the subject of interest. The maps present a radically different method of looking at the world. The project is a collaboration between the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom and the University of Michigan in the United States. These maps have been developed by Mark Newman, the data has been provided by Danny Dorling and the text by Anna Barford. Danny Dorling had written an article in the January 2007 issue of PLoS medicine about the project.⁽¹⁾

The website advertises itself as "the world as you've never seen it before". The site divides maps into map categories. The various categories are Basic, Movement, Transport, Food, Goods, Manufacturers, Services, Resources, Fuel, Production, Work, Income, Wealth, Poverty, Housing, Education, Health, Disease, Disaster, Death, and Destruction, among others. The basic maps deal with land area, total population, total births and projected populations in the years 2050 and 2300 among others.⁽²⁾

The maps and datasets cover 200 territories, and include at least 99.95% of the population. The maps presented are equal area cartograms also known as density-equalising maps. They resize the territory according to the variable being mapped. Each map contains links to a high-quality PDF poster designed for printing. Each map contains links to an excel data file (with map), excel data file (without map), opendoc data file and also technical notes for the data. Each map also contains a brief description of its salient features.⁽²⁾

The website has been designed by John Pritchard and the posters have been designed by Graham Allsopp. The maps use colours to group the world into 12 geographical regions and uses different shades of the region colour for a geographical territory. The colours and shading are consistent throughout the different maps. The shapes of individual territories and of the seas and oceans are preserved as much as possible. The diffusion-based method for producing density-equalising maps has been used for producing the series. The team has been adding maps, usually one category at a time.

The maps in Worldmapper can be accessed in different ways. One is by category; the second is by thumbnail index. There is also an A-Z map index. One can also search for a particular map on the site. The use of PDF posters for personal or educational purposes is permitted. Certain map categories like basic, movement, income, wealth, poverty, housing, education, health, disease, disaster and death will be of particular interest to medical doctors and public health experts. These maps will form a very powerful tool for educating future doctors and other healthcare professionals. Their value for presentations and education in the field of public health and for public health research cannot be overemphasised.

Notifications of new maps can be received using the RSS web feed or by joining a mailing list. Some of the data sources used for creating the maps are the United Nations Environment Programme Global Environment Outlook, GEO Data Portal (geodata.grid.unep.ch/), the World Bank World Development Indicators 2005 (www.worldbank.org/data), United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2004 and World Health Organization 2005 World Health Report (www.who.int/whr/2005/en/). The site plans to make 3D maps which will allow viewers to zoom in and out of the globe. The group plans to produce 100 maps which will show the global distribution of all major world diseases and self-inflicted causes of death.⁽¹⁾

The contact email is info@worldmapper.org. The site is easy to navigate and user-friendly. The data sets, however, require more expertise to handle. This has been described in the FAQ section. The high-quality PDFs of the maps may take time to download especially over a slow internet connection. The site really provides a radically different way of looking at planet Earth!

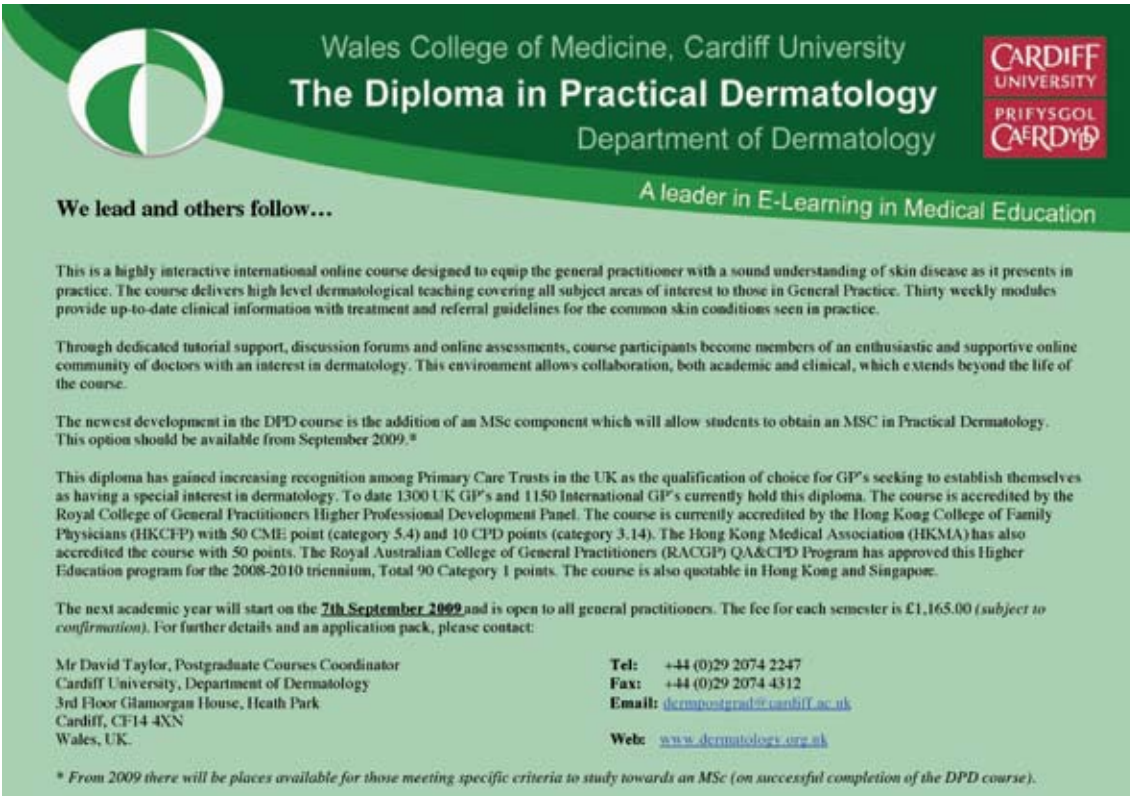
Yours sincerely,

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REFERENCES

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2. Worldmapper. Available at: www.worldmapper.org. Accessed October 12, 2008.



Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff University
The Diploma in Practical Dermatology
Department of Dermatology

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
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We lead and others follow... *A leader in E-Learning in Medical Education*

This is a highly interactive international online course designed to equip the general practitioner with a sound understanding of skin disease as it presents in practice. The course delivers high level dermatological teaching covering all subject areas of interest to those in General Practice. Thirty weekly modules provide up-to-date clinical information with treatment and referral guidelines for the common skin conditions seen in practice.

Through dedicated tutorial support, discussion forums and online assessments, course participants become members of an enthusiastic and supportive online community of doctors with an interest in dermatology. This environment allows collaboration, both academic and clinical, which extends beyond the life of the course.

The newest development in the DPD course is the addition of an MSc component which will allow students to obtain an MSc in Practical Dermatology. This option should be available from September 2009.*

This diploma has gained increasing recognition among Primary Care Trusts in the UK as the qualification of choice for GP's seeking to establish themselves as having a special interest in dermatology. To date 1300 UK GP's and 1150 International GP's currently hold this diploma. The course is accredited by the Royal College of General Practitioners Higher Professional Development Panel. The course is currently accredited by the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians (HKCFP) with 50 CME point (category 5.4) and 10 CPD points (category 3.14). The Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) has also accredited the course with 50 points. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) QA&CPD Program has approved this Higher Education program for the 2008-2010 triennium, Total 90 Category 1 points. The course is also quotable in Hong Kong and Singapore.

The next academic year will start on the **7th September 2009** and is open to all general practitioners. The fee for each semester is £1,165.00 (subject to confirmation). For further details and an application pack, please contact:

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* From 2009 there will be places available for those meeting specific criteria to study towards an MSc (on successful completion of the DPD course).