

Study of Use and Needs of an Online Community of Practice in Oral Medicine

Marie GUSTAFSSON^{a,b,1} and Göran FALKMAN^a

^a *University of Skövde, Skövde, Sweden*

^b *Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, Sweden*

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SOMWeb is online system for knowledge sharing and dissemination in oral medicine [1]. It is used by a group of clinicians in Sweden who hold monthly teleconference meetings. The SOMWeb system uses Semantic Web technologies, for representing examination templates and terminology, as well as storing community data (information about users, meetings, cases, and news). It was developed in cooperation with the clinicians and was introduced in May 2006.

The objectives of this ongoing study are to evaluate how well the system suits the needs of the users, identify how the system can better support the knowledge needs of the user, and identify how the users and the distributed organization can be modeled using ontologies. The methods used are interviews, observations of meetings, and an online questionnaire. This study is part of the project “Pragmatic Patterns for Clinical Knowledge Management” [2], aiming to identify, model, and make use of pragmatic patterns for clinical knowledge management that support evidence-based medicine.

Nine members have been interviewed, nine meetings have been observed at five different locations, and the questionnaire was replied to by 24 of 60 members. The replies to the interview questions and questionnaire indicate that the users find that the system suits their needs and that SOMWeb works better than the previous approach of e-mailing PowerPoint-presentations. To better support the knowledge needs of the users, we are adding functionality suggested by the users. This includes being able to add article suggestions and images from similar cases to the case presentations in the system. The ontology development for modeling the users and organizations of SOMWeb has been initiated, and will be informed by the observations, interviews, and a literature study.

References

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¹ Corresponding Author: E-mail: marie.gustafsson@his.se