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The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

There are many more tools and technologies at our disposal that allow us to do what we all enjoy doing: sharing information, exchanging experience, and harnessing collective intelligence.

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It's one thing to like your work and another to approach it with such a mix of obvious enjoyment and relentless seriousness that there's no way to tell where the work ends and the fooling around begins.

In that characterization, Keith Kaplan, MD, FCAP, would be guilty as charged. On any given weekday, his reach will exceed his grasp.

On his bio for the Mayo Clinic website, Dr. Kaplan, an associate professor of medicine and pathology, lists his interests: general surgical pathology, gastrointestinal pathology, hepatopathology, and pathology informatics.

A quick perusal of his digital pathology blog at <http://www.tissuepathology.typepad.com/> features some 50 topics, including the not-to-be missed "humor" link.

In a presentation for the 2009 CAP Futurescape meeting ([Manifest Destiny](#), September 2009 *CAP TODAY*) and a follow-up telephone interview, Dr. Kaplan was asked to consider the extent to which the Internet has influenced how pathology is practiced, accessed, perceived, and taught.

"The tissue is still the issue," he says, despite dramatic advances in biomarkers, targeted therapies, personalized medicine, and "150 other kinds of -omics." The more things change, the more they stay the same. But the Web has created a quiet revolution in medical care delivery, and the tools are accessible, flexible, and easily learned.

Part of it is picking up the vocabulary and the rhythm of the dialect, says Dr. Kaplan. For example, [the digital pathology blog](#) is what is known as an academic blog. Most physicians who blog, he says, do it "to give their perspective on devices, test, rules, and regulations in medicine." Within the specialty, he adds, "Academic blogging is used to educate and inform the pathology and laboratory community. It's of a less personal nature, but it also affords a lot of opportunities for social marketing and networking."

To describe the rainbow of ways pathologists are now using the Internet, Dr. Kaplan coined the term *Pathology 2.0* (a play on *Web 2.0*, which describes the second age of the Internet, when it became possible to both send and receive information). The terms of art, disruptive technology, or disruptive

innovation refer to new approaches that are so much more useful or appealing than a traditional method that they abruptly replace it. Music CDs and digital cameras are examples of disruptive technologies in the consumer goods context.

Then there is social networking, which in the case of Dr. Kaplan's institution, is bringing patients together to share their experiences via podcast, providing video education on procedures and diagnoses, and creating a community of health care personnel and patients.

Use of the Web to network professionally won't be for everyone, Dr. Kaplan says; not all pathologists enjoy sharing slides for collaborative diagnosis on the Internet. But for those who are intrigued, any of a number of pathology blogs, such as pathtalk.org, a group blog with 15 pathologist authors, would be a good place to start. And those who adopt networking tools such as PathologyPics, Sermo, and PathXchange, Dr. Kaplan says, will quickly come to appreciate the rewards of teleconsultation.

For example, Dr. Kaplan told the group at Futurescape, "We have a series of pancreatic biopsies that we're going to share with our clinical colleagues, as well as pancreas experts across the world, to look at privately, independently, and share the information online instead of mailing glass slides." Clinical colleagues in gastroenterology, who sought a way to look at interobserver comparisons for pathologists, were the driving force behind the project.

"I think we can all do a better job of being informative to our clients and customers, whoever they may be," Dr. Kaplan says. "In a community hospital, it may be your local clinicians, your patient referrals, or other laboratories that use your services. I think that people are hungry for information, and the more that you can provide, the more you will be looked upon as providing valuable services beyond the day-to-day work that we all do."