

# Editing Wikipedia for Academic Credit:

## A pilot of a 4<sup>th</sup> year medical school elective

Amin Azzam, MD, MA, Lauren Maggio, MA, MS(LIS), Evans Whitaker, MD, MLIS,  
Jack McCue, MD Wikipedians: James Heilman, MD, Jake Orlowitz, Brian Basden Content Rules: Val Swisher

### Why?

- Wikipedia(WP) is the most used medical website
- WP heavily used by healthcare professionals, trainees, and patients
- One WP article will reach more people than a career of traditional publishing
- Gives back to WP and the world
- Provides additional training in information finding and writing skills
- Leverages growing knowledge of students
- Teaches students about Open Access to information and the realities of WP.

### How?

5 MS-4 for one month (Nov 2013).  
2 day in-person introductory session  
5 pages edited

- Alcohol withdrawal
- Cirrhosis
- Hepatitis
- Race and Health
- White Blood Cells (WBCs)

A team

- Faculty
- Librarians
- Wikipedians
- Language experts

Evaluation: Pre- and post surveys, interviews, WP page evaluations, closure session, debriefing

### Results?

- Students surprised by amount of work needed to edit one WP page in a month
- Students viewed work as valuable, as “giving back”
- Students reluctant to remove others work or finally publish their own work.
- All students planned to continue editing after the class ended → 3 of 5 have
- Students wanted more faculty oversight and peer interaction
- Metrics for student impact on article, work of editing need improvement
- Students would recommend this elective to others



**WIKIPEDIA**  
*The Free Encyclopedia*

### Background

This is the first US-based class in which medical students received elective credit exclusively for revising health-related WP articles.

The Wikimedia Foundation 100x100 project seeks to deliver the top 100 most important healthcare articles in 100 languages for free to all, including the world’s neediest, by using mobile phone technology.

Students sharpened information literacy skills, constructed knowledge and simplified language to deliver an improved article consciously designed to be read by a wide audience and translated. Students learned about the WP editing and the “Wiki-sphere”.

### Methods

In November, 2013, 5 fourth-year medical students attended 2 days of in-person orientation in which baseline information was collected, class goals, project context, WP editing, and information seeking were discussed.

Students met with faculty, librarians, members of the **WikiProject: Medicine & Wikipedia Education** communities, and **ContentRules** (a readability improvement software company).

Students worked singly to edit heavily-used Wikipedia healthcare articles of their choice for the remainder of the 4 weeks with distance support from the groups mentioned above.

### Evaluation Plan

**Baseline:** Student knowledge and attitudes about Wikipedia assessed.

**Mid-rotation:** Individual interview sessions with course instructors.

**End of rotation:** Survey reassessing student knowledge and attitudes about WP. Students discussed outcomes and challenges during a virtual session attended by faculty, librarians, and class advisors. The class closed with a faculty-led confidential debriefing session.

The WP articles were also evaluated at baseline and end of rotation to assess the students’ contributions to content and readability.

### Discussion

#### Dissemination:

WGEA 2014 workshop and short paper presented, *Academic Medicine* “Innovations” article submitted.

#### Reflective Critique:

Review of 360<sup>o</sup> feedback confirms it was valuable and should be repeated. Potential areas of improvement include: 1) Pair editing of an article, 2) Peer editing, 3) Commentary or brainstorming, 4) Increased faculty and advisor oversight of the editing process, and 5) Creation and submission for traditional publication of a revised version of the Wikipedia article.

**Class Objectives** – on request

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Article	Page views during the month of 12/2013
Cirrhosis	151,621
White Blood Cell	138,597
Hepatitis	112,459
Alcohol Withdrawal	52,514
Race and Health	3,880

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The one-minute version

A “deeper-dive”

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### Course Outline

<b>Pre-course Activities</b> (virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students familiarize themselves with the course wiki page, create Wikipedia (WP) accounts and complete an online WP training module</li> <li>• Baseline Content Rules (readability) reports created</li> </ul>
<b>Week 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors and students engaged in dialogue on Wikipedia's global philosophy and relevance to healthcare</li> <li>• Students introduced to logistics of editing Wikipedia</li> <li>• Overnight students independently completed an online module (The Wikipedia Adventure) and selected their Wikipedia article for editing</li> </ul>
Day 1 (in-person & virtual)	
Day 2 (in-person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students independently edited their chosen Wikipedia entry with hands-on support from instructors and Wikipedia volunteers</li> <li>• An "Ambassador" from the Wikipedia Education Program presented Wikipedia Education Program presented historical perspectives and best practices for editing Wikipedia</li> <li>• Content Rules introduced the company's service and linked the importance of simplified writing to the translation efforts of Translators without Borders</li> </ul>
Remainder of Week 1 (virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students provided Content Rules reports</li> <li>• Continued independent editing of Wikipedia with assistance as needed</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b> (virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued independent editing of Wikipedia.</li> </ul>
Mid-rotation <b>interviews</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students individually interviewed by course instructors</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b> (virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued independent editing of Wikipedia</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b> (virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued independent editing of Wikipedia</li> </ul>
<b>Post-course Activities</b> (virtual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-course focus group conducted</li> <li>• Final Content Rules reports created</li> </ul>

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