Halloween on Canal St
Elaine Halley gets residential and looks at critical reading

Following on from a few more webinars, the course module on critical reading has begun. This is hosted on Manchester University’s own platform called Blackboard, which allows us to follow the course on-line week by week. We were introduced to the system by Anne-Marie Glenny, who is the course leader and tutor and advised us that if we keep up week by week she will be facilitating the discussion board and we will get feedback week by week. This has been a good discipline as otherwise it has been tempting to let the lectures build up and then find you have nine hours of webinar to catch up on in a short space of time.

The blackboard system utilises interactive learning with videos and tutorials on searching for documents on Medline and other databases – I had no idea there were so many different ways to search! There are also links to further learning including some very useful checklists on how to critically appraise different types of studies – dusting down my memory banks to remember the difference between an RCT (not the endo type!) and a cohort study etc. And I am thrilled, in a kind of sad way that I should probably not admit, to see that this week there is a section on Endnote – I may finally understand how to keep track of all my references! Hooray!

We faced considerable stress and late nights to complete the submission of our next five clinical cases – which was reduced to three at the last minute, but I managed to submit five as that means I’ve only got six instead of eight to get together before the end of January. The clinical case submissions are very specific which makes case selection quite difficult – and we are learning how to include more evidence in the case write-ups. The specific feedback is yet to be received so we’ll see! I was fortunate to have documented many cases over the years which I could use in some instances (although there always seems to me a photo missing!) but if you have just started with photography at the start of this course, the workload to get all the cases in must be even harder.

This deadline was closely followed by our second residential course held in Manchester with teaching at the MANDEC institute. We had three days with Prof Nasser Barghi, who has unbelievable energy and passion for teaching – and provided a detailed update on materials, repairs in porcelain and handling Zirconia. The hands-on session was well supported by Opident who had order forms for everything that was mentioned in the lectures. The Sunday was a hands-on critical appraisal session (not easy after Halloween on Canal Street – you’d think I’d learn!) followed by a hands-on session on muscle exam and facebow registration.

Again, I have the greatest respect for the students who have travelled literally from all over the world. Never again can I complain about the flight from Edinburgh. The diversity within our student group truly adds to the learning experience.

Meanwhile – I have two deadlines looming in the next few weeks – a critical reading assignment and two essays. Help – Medline here I come!!