The state-of-the-art in medicine changes quickly. This imposes continuous pressure on health professionals to update their skills and knowledge. Keeping track of ongoing changes in medical doctrine may be impossible for many of them, especially if one considers the trends for a growing load of clinical work and complex reimbursement process in numerous countries.

Established methods of continuing education offered to health professionals appear frequently ineffective for keeping clinical competences up-to-date.

Quite often these traditional approaches to postgraduate medical education do not seem to be cost-effective as they require accessibility from health professionals at a particular time and place. Many traditional ways of updating medical knowledge offered to health professionals fail due to lack of coherence with everyday experience.

In the ideal situation, medical postgraduate education should be a seamless part of the clinical environment. Furthermore, access to upgrading clinical skills and knowledge should be ubiquitous; not bound to a specific time or place. Such requirements are fulfilled by a new approach to education, so-called distance learning. Distance learning could be described as “the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance” [45]. The term distance learning does not have one, simple and concise definition widely accepted throughout the scientific and commercial world. Different authors reveal
numerous approaches when shaping the definition of distance learning, however, most of them accept the following attributes:

- separation of teacher and student in time, in distance, or both,
- two-way communication (including e-mail, teleconferences, newsgroups, chat-rooms) that allows teacher and student to cooperate in a synchronous or asynchronous way,
- use of video, audio, computer, multimedia communication or traditional printed materials mixed together.

Distance learning offers a number of advantages to clinicians. It removes barriers to learning resulting from time and place, allowing clinicians to access educational resources in their work or home environment. Of course, distance education requires the use of dedicated instructional delivery systems, which will serve as a connection between health professionals and educational resources.

1 Importance of Medical Studies — What Is Specific in Them

Internet development incited high expectations about the access to digital resources. This phenomenon was also mirrored in the healthcare domain where both health professionals and patients expect the ability to access high quality educational, multimedia-based resources online. Simultaneously, persistent pressure on clinicians to maintain professional development and lifelong medical education has a great impact on the search for efficient tools of information sharing in this environment. It is also obvious that digital recordings of medical procedures e.g. endoscopic diagnostic and therapeutic techniques may be used as real-life educational resources for physicians in training. The educational and training processes may be considerably enhanced through the use of huge volumes of recordings obtained by diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that were performed in healthcare institutions. This potential is not fully appreciated, even if there were many initiatives focused on the reutilization of “everyday practice” resources for educating and training after appropriate preparation of the data.

The flood of information and access to huge resources would not be possible without the use of digital libraries. Digital library may be defined as the electronic extension of functions users typically perform and the resources they access in a traditional library [48]. However, the concept of digital library extends access to resources, which are available in other types of repositories like video recordings or museum objects. The process of shifting from text and image-based systems to audio and video is continuous.