

ABSTRACT NUMBER: OS1

Student Perceptions Of A Programme In Family Medicine At The Faculty of Medicine, Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Background

Family medicine is an integral part of global undergraduate medical curricula. The recently introduced two week programme in family medicine for 3rd year medical students at the Colombo Medical Faculty reflects this initiative. It is important to evaluate the perceptions of these students as primary consumers.

Method

The study population comprised 26 third year medical students who have completed the family medicine programme. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire assessed general attitude on family medicine, and perceptions on content and competencies through several questions each on a Likert scale of 0 to 5. Response rate was 100%.

Based on themes emerging from the feedback, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with 22 students. Data was recorded verbatim, collated and analyzed.

Results

All reported having insight and understanding of concepts in family medicine, and awareness of organising a family practice. The majority reported interest towards learning family medicine (n=19, 73.1%). This was reinforced at the FGD.

Mean level of perceived understanding of content areas was high (average-3.6). Students gained valuable information through personal experiences narrated by lecturers who were family practitioners. Many felt that learning activities should be conducted in an ideal family practice setting. Several felt the need for clear objectives and reading material.

The mean level of perceived competency in essential skills was also high (average-3.4). However, students strongly felt that they would be more competent if interactive, practice based activities such as supervised patient consultations were conducted. They suggested that assessments too should be practical.

Conclusions

The family medicine programme generated enthusiasm and interest in the subject, and concepts were well understood. Competencies were perceived to be satisfactory. However, a structured programme in a ideal learning environment, with clear guidelines and clerkship based activities will promote the achievement of skills and attitudes for family practice.

ABSTRACT NUMBER: OS2

Are Graduating Medical Students In The United States Pursuing The Most Satisfying Medical Specialties?

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Background

In the US, thousands of year 4 medical students are challenged with decision of selecting a medical specialty. Research has revealed a significant difference in satisfaction among the various medical disciplines. Our study evaluated the relationship between national specialty satisfaction and selection choice among graduating medical students at University of South Florida (USF).

Method

We reviewed a national physician survey published in 2002 to identify satisfaction among various medical disciplines. We then selected graduating students at USF to represent medical students in the United States. A comparison and statistical analysis was performed for graduates from 2001-2003.

Results

There was no significant correlation between national medical specialty satisfaction and USF medical student's career choice (p=0.2914, Pearson correlation=0.43). There was also no statistical correlation between medical specialty selection and distribution in the nation compared to USF (P=0.7197, Pearson correlation is 0.1519).

Conclusion

Our study illustrates that graduating USF medical students are not selecting the most satisfying medical specialties. Our data also shows that USF graduating seniors reflect a difference in specialty distribution in comparison to national physician distribution. Diversity at USF may account for this variation.

ABSTRACT NUMBER: OS3

Competency-Based Education: Perception Of Confidence On Competencies Among House Officers

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Background

Competency is the ability to perform a task. A person gains competency through education, training and experience. Medical schools in the world provide the educational experiences necessary for the acquisition of minimum essential competencies to the future doctors to meet the

health needs of the region. Discussions about competency-based education are occurring at all levels of medical education, such as medical school, residency and continuing education. Clinical competence, along with humanistic qualities, is the attribute expected of every practicing doctor. The objective of this study was to investigate the confidence gained on procedural and communication abilities of house officers aimed to ensure that graduates were well prepared.

Methods

A cross sectional study was done on the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia medical graduates of academic session 2003-2004 during their housemanship training. A questionnaire containing different attributes of competencies was sent through registered mail to all 172 graduates. Only 32 graduates completed and returned back the questionnaires. Response rate was 18.69%.

Results

This study revealed that 100% respondents were confident in performing procedure like urinary bladder catheterization while 13% and 22% were confident in performing exchange transfusion and lumbar puncture, respectively. 59% and 69% graduates were comfortable to communicate with patients and support staff. On the other hand 41% were comfortable to communicate with patients' families. In breaking bad news and counseling patients, 22% and 51% respondents could communicate well.

Conclusions

As expected, the house officers were less confident to perform procedures involving higher skills and experience such as exchange transfusion and lumbar puncture. The majority of house officers were not confident to break bad news. These might be areas that need to be improved in the curriculum.

ABSTRACT NUMBER : 054

Need For In-service Training And Significance Of In-service And Continuing Education Activities

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Introduction

Over the years, health care in Malaysia had undergone many changes. Nurses form a major proportion of the human resource in hospitals. Data gathered from the staff nurses in respect of their participation in continuing education will provide valuable feedback regarding in-service training needs and the relevance of post-basic courses attended.

Objective

The study aims to gather information from the staff nurses regarding their attendance and opinions of post-basic courses and continuing professional education activities.

Methods

The participants, comprising all staff nurses were required to complete a questionnaire regarding their participation in in-service continuing education in the form of seminars,

workshops and post-basic courses. Responses were in the form of "Yes" or "No" to each statement in the questionnaire. The results indicated the importance and relevance of continuing education as viewed by the staff nurses themselves.

Results

A total of 353 staff nurses participated in the research. Generally 56.57% of the respondents had attended post-basic courses during the last six months in service 99.14 % of the staff nurses agreed that post-basic courses were essential and important for developing them both personally and professionally. Overall, around 89.86% of the respondents considered post-basic courses enjoyable, while 90.94% would recommend the course to other nurses and 91.26% of the nurses found the course beneficial. Not all the nurses who responded agreed that career development should be dependent on evidence of attendance of continuing education. On the contrary, twenty-five (7.16%) of the respondents did not feel that career development should be dependent on evidence of attendance of continuing education.

Conclusion

These findings in the study had contributed towards ascertaining the relevance and benefits of in-service education and continuing professional development for staff nurses in state hospitals under the auspices of the Ministry of Health.

ABSTRACT NUMBER: 055

Outcome-Based Education In A Malaysian Medical School: Students' Perception On The Effectiveness Of Task-based Learning Activities In Achieving The Expected Learning Outcomes During Clinical Years

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Introduction

The Malaysian Higher Education Ministry endorses Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and requires a programme to have a clear definition of competencies expected of its graduates.^{1,2} Since its inception; the clinical programme of the International Medical University (IMU) has implemented OBE approaches with eight IMU outcomes³. As a continuum of Problem-based Learning; Task-based Learning (TBL) during the clinical years is conducted in small-groups sessions utilising "tasks" normally undertaken by a doctor as the focus for learning^{4,5}.

Objective

This study aims to assess clinical students' perception of the usefulness of TBL sessions in achieving their learning outcomes.

Methods

All students (semesters 6-10) were invited to participate in this cross-sectional study done in December 2007 utilising a self-administered questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. It assessed the students' perception on the TBL sessions conducted during their clinical attachments in various disciplines. Mean-scores, standard deviations, and Pearson Coefficient of correlation were used to gauge the association between TBL processes and IMU (learning) outcomes.

Results

A total of 240 students responded, a response rate of 65%. The mean-scores for the IMU outcome rated on a five-point scale are: SDL- (Self-directed Learning): 3.00, CT-(Critical Thinking): 2.96, PD-(Personal Development): 2.87, CS-(Communication Skills): 2.88, and ABS-(Application of Basic Sciences): 2.77. These values indicated that students were favorable in their opinion on TBL in achieving the learning outcomes. Junior students (semesters 6-7) gave more favorable ratings on achievement of the IMU outcomes. Regarding the TBL process, the mean score is 2.50; indicating that there is room for improvement. Apart from this, the results demonstrated existence of moderate positive associations between the TBL process and CS and ABS, but not with SDL, CT and PD (the coefficient values are less than 0.07).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the TBL process positively contributes to mainly two IMU outcomes namely Communication Skills and Application of Basic Sciences. Conversely, students did not associate their learning experience in TBL with other outcomes such as Self-Directed Learning, Critical Thinking and Personal Development. This could partly be due to the fact that these outcomes are long-term in nature, thus students could not perceive the immediate gains.

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ABSTRACT NUMBER: 056

Student Perceptions Of Selectives As A Self Directed Learning Tool In Anatomy

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Introduction

Learners of the future are expected to be self directed and self motivated. They should fully benefit from the various learning experiences preparing themselves for the challenges envisioned in the health care profession. One of the learning tools in International Medical University (IMU) is the Selectives program. Anatomy is one of the subjects chosen as a Selective by some students. The Selective is usually a relevant topic related to Anatomy, but outside core. The students attend plenaries, video shows, seminars and group discussions during the 4-week programme. The learning is assessed by multiple choice Type A questions and group – based poster presentations.

Objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of the selective program as a tool for self-directed learning (SDL).

Method

The study was a cross sectional survey conducted in January 2008, using 44 students in Semester 4 of the M 1/2006 cohort. Student perceptions on the effectiveness of the programme were assessed by using a self administered questionnaire.

Results

In general, students overall agreement on all five modes of delivery were higher than overall disagreement. The differences of mean between agreement and disagreement were statistically significant for poster session ($p = 0.0001$), video shows ($p = 0.023$), plenaries ($p = 0.0013$) and forums ($p = 0.001$). For the assessment there was no significant difference between the scores of agreement and disagreement. Majority of the students (93.02%) agreed that poster presentation promoted their critical thinking, research and team work. Student preferred plenaries which are more focused on anatomy to that of generalized topics.

The results showed that the students' perceptions of selective program as an effective tool for SDL are satisfactory. Yet there is some dissatisfaction on the assessments, the reasons of which need to be further studied and addressed.

ABSTRACT NUMBER : 057

Students' Response On The Community Pharmacy Attachment

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Introduction

Community Pharmacy Attachment Program is organized annually to equip the pharmacy undergraduates with basic technical and communication skills, relevant to the practice of community pharmacy. It is expected that all student pharmacists engage themselves in this program, in order to accomplish total contribution towards the Community Pharmacy course assessment.

Method

In the attachment manual, a feedback form was included. The performance assessment guide was also supplied and the preceptors' evaluations have been summarized. In this paper, both 2005 and 2006 students' response (69% and 74%, respectively) on the community pharmacy attachment is presented. The 2007 batch of students will forward their comments by the end of semester, in April 2008.

Result

It was found out that majority of students showed high tendency to recommend this training to their peers (80% and 90% responses, 2005 and 2006 students respectively). The beneficial aspect of Community Pharmacy course was popularly described by the students as "expanding knowledge". "Counselling" was found to be the most exciting and challenging activity. In addition, one-third of both batches of students referred "None" as the most uninteresting task during their attachment, followed by "Waiting for customers". This generally reflects a constructive response on the management of the attachment program, including positive involvement of the community pharmacies in educating the student pharmacists. Briefing session was suggested to be held prior to this attachment. However, the theories concerning the practice of community pharmacy were conveyed in lectures after this specialized training.

Conclusion

It is hoped that, with the continuous support from the community pharmacies, the faculty is able to produce global pharmacy undergraduates as a confident and mobile, worldly marketable and approachable by the community in promoting health-related issues.

ABSTRACT NUMBER: 058

Knowledge And Opinion About Health Supplements Among Health Sciences Students: Are They Influenced By Their Usage?

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Background

The usage of health supplement among Malaysians is prevalent for a market survey in 2001 estimated a monthly spending of US\$17.30 by Malaysians. As healthcare practitioners, nurses, pharmacists and medical doctors are in a position to provide unbiased and evidence-based health information for the consumers. We have not found any surveys of the knowledge and practice of these professionals in Malaysia.

Method

This is a cross-sectional self-administered questionnaire survey of medical, pharmacy and nursing students in International Medical University (IMU). The questionnaire consisted of three sections: (A) Personal information, (B) Health supplement usage, (C) Knowledge assessment. For simplicity, we classify dietary supplements into three groups: (i) Vitamins, (ii) Minerals, (iii) Non-vitamins non-minerals (NVNM). The knowledge about health supplements was based on 15 single-best multiple choice questions (6 on vitamins, 6 on minerals and 5 on NVNM, two questions touched on both vitamins and minerals).

Results

697 medical, pharmacy and nursing students participated in this survey (687 for consumption, 677 for knowledge). 71.3% reported using any health supplements for the past one year, and 39.6% reported using them daily (any vitamins 30.6%, any minerals 9.7%, any NVNM 24.8%). Students who reported poorer health or had current health problems were more likely to consume health supplements daily. The mean knowledge score was 66.1%, scores for questions asking about vitamins was best (82.7%), followed by minerals (62.3%) and NVNM (58.4%). The knowledge did not differ much between students who did or did not use health supplements daily. On the whole the students were non-committal about the benefits of health supplements.

Conclusions

Between one-quarter to nearly one-third of health sciences students in IMU used health supplements. Health concern is a factor in influencing their use of health supplements. However, usage of health supplements is not associated to better knowledge of these products. Their opinion about health supplements is mixed, reflecting their skepticism about the purported benefits of such products, even among the users. Their knowledge about health supplements in general is average, but knowledge about NVNM is notably deficient.