

Medical students' perspective on the place of team-based learning in the curriculum

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Dear editor

We read with great interest the recent article by Yan et al¹ discussing the use of Team-Based Learning (TBL) in medical school. As medical students, our exposure to a number of different learning methods allows us to offer a unique perspective on the effectiveness of TBL.

Yan et al¹ explored the need for a more innovative learning method that allows a deeper understanding of the medical sciences. Long gone are the days where traditional lectures form the foundation for teaching of the medical curriculum. In the millennial world, higher education is quickly advancing from teacher-centered instruction to a much more student-centered approach. The extent to which this should be applied in the medical curriculum is where the discussion lies. TBL champions the student-centered approach; those taught through this model reported improved enthusiasm and development of skill-based characteristics. Another notable advantage of TBL mentioned in Faezi et al's article² is a slower rate of decline in scores after the TBL sessions. Although TBL has many benefits, it is important to note that it does not address all the shortcomings in the medical curriculum. The question still stands – to which extent should TBL be implemented in the general teaching of medical students?

We believe the effectiveness of TBL is dependent on the willingness of students to engage with content. Many believe that pre-reading for sessions can be excessive and better delivered through a lecture.³ Throughout the year, students experience a loss in motivation in the absence of teaching. Students are then less likely to attend sessions with the increasing workload, which is worsened by a perceived lack of their own ability to cope and poor time management. This results in a spiral effect where educational issues further impact upon motivation.⁴ While it is important to appreciate the individual and group benefits of TBL, we should not neglect providing a student-centered method that can be personalized by millennial learners.

TBL is of great use to educators for its potential to increase depth of understanding and engagement. However, we feel that the use of TBL as the sole teaching method may not provide the solution to the drawbacks of traditional teaching. A student-centered approach is far more beneficial and caters for the educational needs of all students. We suggest a synergistic approach between TBL and traditional lectures. This hybrid has the potential to increase student satisfaction, boost total scores, and cater to all students.⁵ We believe that this approach holds promise

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in providing an equal educational platform and a more personalized approach to active learning.

Disclosure

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Author's reply

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Dear editor

We do agree with the opinion of Abdirahman Osman et al. The pre-reading for the sessions might increase the student's burden, and sometimes, the traditional teaching method can improve the reading efficiency for the students. Therefore, it is better to establish a synergistic approach or balance between the TBL and traditional lectures. We do thank the team of Professor Abdirahman Osman for their valuable suggestion.

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