

Scenario-based teaching in undergraduate medical education

Kunj Patel
Omar El Tokhy

Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College
London, London, UK

Dear editor

We read with great interest the study by Frost et al¹ which highlights the importance of scenario-based teaching (SBT) of clinical communication in medical undergraduate pediatrics teaching. SBT involves students navigating a storyline based around a complex problem, running in parallel with case-based learning. We were impressed by the results of the SBT program at Cardiff University School of Medicine. As medical students currently on our pediatric rotation at Imperial College London, we have experienced at first hand the benefits of SBT. Throughout the placement, it continues to help us tackle the complexities which arise when communicating with children and their families. We have noted its particular benefit in breaking bad news to families. Without effective teaching on this particular scenario, a failure to grasp this skill could exacerbate patient and parent concerns. Much like the authors of this study highlight,¹ we believe specific teaching on communication skills should be a mandatory part of medical undergraduate education at every institution. Imperial College School of Medicine has developed a similar teaching style which has been unparalleled in its benefit to us during our pediatric rotation. Although there is scant literature available specifically addressing communicating with children and parents at undergraduate level, the use of SBT throughout undergraduate medical teaching should not be underestimated.

The results of Frost et al's¹ study also reflect our pediatric educational experience. For example, some students (27%) felt that a group size of ten encouraged inter-peer learning, however the majority (73%) thought that these groups were too large to maximize educational benefit. From our experiences at Imperial College Healthcare National Health Service Trust, we would suggest groups of four students, as this has produced the most benefit during our rotation. Furthermore, we would suggest piloting the introduction of video recordings of student-patient consultations. Accumulation of evidence^{2,3} suggests that medical students benefit from the review of consultations with real patients, so much so that it has become an essential component of training and teaching. A study performed by Maguire et al⁴ demonstrated that video recorded SBT sessions resulted in a greater change to clinical behavior than the review of individual audiotape or group-based teaching sessions. Results of this study provide more evidence to the efficacy of SBT in a medical setting.

Subsequently, a literature review by Howells et al⁵ supported our recommendation of videotape recordings as a means of enabling feedback on verbal and nonverbal

Correspondence: Omar El Tokhy
Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College
London, London, SW7 2AZ, UK
Email omar.el-toukhy12@imperial.ac.uk

communication. However, one potential downside of this approach would be the anxiety that students experience whilst being recorded. In this situation, we believe that the benefits of this approach far outweigh this, since it would be fair to say that such anxiety experienced as a medical undergraduate accurately reflects future consultations with distressed parents and their children as a practicing doctor.

In conclusion, we recommend the use of a scenario-based pediatric clinical communication skills program as an educational tool in undergraduate medical education. Implementation of SBT will go a long way to fulfilling the core competencies of a doctor as outlined by the General Medical Council.⁶

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

References

1. Frost KA, Metcalf EP, Brooks R, Kinnersley P, Greenwood SR, Powell CV. Teaching pediatric communication skills to medical students. *Adv Med Educ Pract*. 2015;6:35–43.
2. de la Croix A, Skelton J. The reality of role-play: interruptions and amount of talk in simulated consultations. *Med Educ*. 2009;43(7):695–703.
3. Eekhout T, Gerits M, Bouquillon D, Schoenmakers B. Video training with peer feedback in real-time consultation: acceptability and feasibility in a general-practice setting. *Postgrad Med J*. 2016;92(1090):431–435.
4. Maguire P, Roe P, Goldberg D, Jones S, Hyde C, O'Dowd T. The value of feedback in teaching interviewing skills to medical students. *Psych Med*. 1978;8(4):695–704.
5. Howells RJ, Davies HA, Silverman JD. Teaching and learning consultation skills for paediatric practice. *Arch Dis Child*. 2006;91(4):367–370.
6. General Medical Council. *Tomorrow's Doctors: Recommendations on Undergraduate Medical Education*. London: General Medical Council. Available from: http://www.gmc-uk.org/Tomorrow_s_Doctors_1214.pdf_48905759.pdf. Accessed November 6, 2016.

Dove Medical Press encourages responsible, free and frank academic debate. The content of the Advances in Medical Education and Practice 'letters to the editor' section does not necessarily represent the views of Dove Medical Press, its officers, agents, employees, related entities or the Advances in Medical Education and Practice editors. While all reasonable steps have been taken to confirm the content of each letter, Dove Medical Press accepts no liability in respect of the content of any letter, nor is it responsible for the content and accuracy of any letter to the editor.

Advances in Medical Education and Practice

Dovepress

Publish your work in this journal

Advances in Medical Education and Practice is an international, peer-reviewed, open access journal that aims to present and publish research on Medical Education covering medical, dental, nursing and allied health care professional education. The journal covers undergraduate education, postgraduate training and continuing medical education

including emerging trends and innovative models linking education, research, and health care services. The manuscript management system is completely online and includes a very quick and fair peer-review system. Visit <http://www.dovepress.com/testimonials.php> to read real quotes from published authors.

Submit your manuscript here: <http://www.dovepress.com/advances-in-medical-education-and-practice-journal>