

Encouraging medical students' self-directed learning during a paediatric clerkship

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Introduction

- Self-directed learning is integral to medical professionalism
- But how do we best encourage development of self-directed learning in medical students?
- We introduced a compulsory assignment for all medical students during their paediatric clerkship
- Each of them is required to identify an authentic clinical problem and illuminate it through literature studies
- The students present the results verbally for all the doctors within the department

Research questions:

1. Does the assignment encourage medical students' self-directed learning?
2. What is in it for the department?

Methodology

- Focus group discussions with specialists, residents and medical students
- The discussions are transcribed verbatim and analysed by themes

Statements from focus-group discussions

Some of the presentations have inspired me to study more literature

I think this is some of the best teaching we have had!

A supportive and positive educational environment is a prerequisite

I think that the assignment enhances the students' involvement

My self-efficacy grew when I saw colleagues learning from my presentation

I learned to search specific literature when meeting the clinical problems

Specialists

Residents

Medical students

Results....

1. Self-directed learning was encouraged

- It was generally agreed that the medical students learned to search for specific literature prompted by a clinical problem
- The students largely felt comfortable with presenting. The specialists were aware of their responsibility in creating a safe environment and giving a proper feedback to the medical students

2. Discussion was deep and learning was initiated

- Participants agreed that after each presentation there was a spirited discussion
- Residents and specialists mentioned that often a new and fresh perspective was taken. This frequently stimulated them to do further studies

Conclusions

- Medical students has developed their skills in self-directed learning
- Medical students self-efficacy is strengthened
- The department benefited due to deeper discussions of fresh perspectives. Physicians were inspired to study more
- A supportive and positive educational environment is a prerequisite for success
- We can warmly recommend other departments with medical students to organize similar assignments



Fig1. A medical student presents at the morning round

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