Lived Experiences in ‘Active’ Small Group Learning

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ABSTRACT

Active learning is becoming increasingly important in medical schools. In this article, the author describes his experiences with active learning in two medical schools in Nepal. The author employed active learning during pharmacology ‘practical’ sessions and medical humanities modules, as well as during correlation seminars. The author has also used the technique during workshops. Faculties are trained in small group facilitation skills during faculty training workshops.

Keywords: Active Learning, Correlation Seminars, Medical Humanities, Nepal, Pharmacology, Small Groups

INTRODUCTION

In a recent article, the celebrated pathologist Dr. Vinay Kumar highlights the importance of promoting active learning in Indian medical schools (Kumar, 2012). I have been involved in promoting active small group learning in my discipline of clinical pharmacology, in the medical humanities and in other areas in the Himalayan country of Nepal. In this article I briefly share my experiences.

Two Medical Schools in Nepal

In Nepal, the six basic science subjects of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pathology, microbiology and pharmacology are taught in an integrated organ system-based manner during the first two years of the undergraduate medical (MBBS) course. I have worked at Manipal College of Medical Sciences (MCOMS), Pokhara and am presently working at KIST Medical College (KISTMC), Lalitpur. I am a clinical pharmacologist by training and have a keen interest in teaching students to use essential medicines rationally. The department of Pharmacology at MCOMS was involved in teaching students to communicate drug and non-drug information to a simulated patient. The department aimed to teach students to use essential drugs rationally. The laboratory was arranged in a traditional manner with a blackboard, a chair for the teacher, benches and desks for students. In 2003, my former colleague and good friend, Dr. P. Subish joined the department and the World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva was kind enough to supply the department with copies of the ‘Guide to good prescribing’ and ‘Teacher’s guide to good prescribing’. I also obtained a copy of the WHO booklet ‘Ethical criteria for medicinal drug promotion.’ I along with my colleagues decided to introduce...
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