

Using a group feedback approach to enhance evaluation of undergraduate clinical teaching.

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Introduction

Context:

- GP-based clinical placements in Year 1 MBBS; longitudinal contact with tutor; 12 themed days through the academic year; group of 6-8 students.
- Historically poor response rate to individual anonymised surveys; 20-30% response rates; some tutors received no feedback.
- Feedback often polarised; comments not explained.

Intervention:

- Use of a proforma developed by Booth et al., 2008 to structure collective feedback from the group on penultimate placement day.
- Using skills students develop in problem-based learning; one student acts as chair for the group, another scribes, i.e. records the discussion.
- Students report ambivalence about whether their views and opinions are taken seriously (Spencer and Schmelkin, 2002).

Aims

- Facilitate meaningful engagement of students in the process of evaluating teaching.
- Encourage reflective practice and development of communications skills through use of group discussion.
- Enable development of tutors as educators through provision of detailed, structured feedback on their teaching.

Methodology

- Ethics approval from QMREC in December 2014.
- Pilot at 8 GP placements – MBBS Year 1 2014/15.
- Convenience sample.
- Modified Booth et al., 2008 proforma used.
- Researchers present but not facilitating.
- Followed up with surveys of participating students.
- Focus group with participating students.
- Tutor survey.



Results

- With support from the Westfield Fund the pilot was extended in 2015/16.
- All forty seven Medicine in Society sites took part (>320 students).
- Tutor survey after feedback received.
- Focus groups with students.
- Thematic analysis of feedback returned by students.

Results – Key outcomes from pilot

- Method acceptable to tutors: tutor survey and anecdotal feedback.
- Acceptable to students: observation of groups, student survey, and focus groups.
- Facilitator not needed.
- Students comfortable with loss of anonymity.

It was something fun, it wasn't something that you write it down and you find it boring, you talk
(Student in focus group)

I don't mind it being anonymous or not, its constructive feedback... it's something more to improve
(Student in focus group)

Results – Key outcomes from extended project

- 100% response rate from 47 sites (26% RR from usual anonymised survey).
- Detailed, specific, considered comments from students.
- Evidence that students can reflect on their own learning.
- Students able to consider the tutor perspective.
- Students able to consider and represent differing viewpoints.

Insight into tutor perspective:

'Because if you look at it from the other view, it could be their fear that if they give you your grade early - so say they give you a B when you're expecting an A - they may get detrimental feedback.'
(Comment from student in focus group)

Differing viewpoints in returned feedback:

'A few members of the group felt that they would have liked to practice clinical skills on real patients, though others expressed that they may feel uncomfortable with this.'
(Comment in feedback to a tutor)

Value of discussion/reflection on teaching:

'It is good to have the group feedback so that you can bounce ideas off each other and hear things you maybe hadn't thought about it before.'
(Student in focus group)

Tutor Perspective

- Of the 10 tutors who responded, all found the group feedback to be more useful than the information from the BOS survey.
- The tutor who found it to be about the same felt that the feedback received was dominated by one voice.



How useful was the group feedback compared to BOS data?

Project outcomes

- Student champions involved throughout.
- MHB, OA and ED co-presented work at Association for the Study of Medical Education (ASME) annual scientific conference in Belfast in July.
- Ongoing student involvement.
- Group feedback continuing in MBBS Year 1 and extended to MBBS year 2 in 2016/17.

Further work

- Continue to evaluate the acceptability of the method to students and tutors.
- Ongoing comparative analysis between feedback generated by the 'group feedback' method and anonymous BOS surveys with a view to using one method only for the evaluation of clinical placements in the early years of the MBBS programme 2017/18.

References

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