

Planning a Medical Lecture

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Abstract

The aims of the lecture should be clearly defined. These will help to define the teaching methods and the structure. If, for example, the purpose of the lecture is to introduce new knowledge and concepts, then a classic lecture structure might be most appropriate. On the other hand, if the purpose is to make the students aware of different approaches to a particular clinical problem, a problem oriented design in which alternative approaches are presented and discussed might be a more appropriate format.

Lectures are still a common teaching method in both undergraduate and postgraduate medical education. Properly done, the lecture is a creative and personal work by the teacher modeled upon his intellectual scaffolding. Few other forms of instructional method demand such a high degree of originality from the teachers, making it both challenging and rewarding for them. Their continued popularity is due to the fact that they represent an effective and efficient means of teaching new concepts and knowledge.

Al - Kindy Col Med J 2010; Vol .6 No. (1) p:141

Basic Organization of a Lecture

- Introduction
 - Purpose
 - Introductory comments
 - Ground rules of the lecture
- Body
 - Arguments and concepts
 - Key concepts first
 - Competing and controversial topics later
- Conclusion
 - Question and answer
 - Brief and succinct take-home message
 - Further reading

Introduction

In the first moments of a lecture it is important that the students are given some sense of place and direction. Thus a brief summary of the previous lecture and an indication of the major themes and learning objectives for the current session provide both you and the students with a relatively easy start. Students learn well by "doing." Yet there is an understandable tendency for students to regard lectures as an opportunity to sit back, be entertained, and "soak up" the learning. However, you can use various methods to encourage students to take a more active part in the learning process and to transform them from a state of *captive listeners to active contributors*.

Ask questions

It is useful to ask questions of the group at various stages in the lecture, to check comprehension and promote discussion. Many lecturers are intimidated by the silence following a question and fall into the trap of answering it themselves. Wait for the answers to come.

Get students to ask you questions

An alternative to getting students to answer questions is to ask them to direct questions at you. A good way of overcoming students' normal fear of embarrassment is to ask them to prepare questions in groups of two or three. Seeking answers to the question from other students, before adding your own views, can increase the level of interaction further.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique for activating the students' knowledge or current understanding of an issue or theme. The lecturer invites answers to a question or problem from the audience and writes them, without comment, on a board or overhead. After a short period, usually about two or three minutes, the lecturer reviews the list of "answers" with the class. The answers can be used to provide

material for the next part of the lecture or to give students an idea of where they are before they move on.

Buzz groups

Buzz groups also encourage interaction. They consist of groups of two to five students working for a few minutes on a question, problem, or exercise set by the lecturer. Buzz group activity is a useful means of getting students to process and use new information to solve problems.

Mini-Assessments

Mini-assessments and exercises are used in lectures to help students to recognize gaps in their learning and to encourage them to use new material in practice. Brief assessments can also allow the lecturer to measure how well the messages are being understood. Students could be asked, for example, to complete a brief, multiple choice questionnaire or a “one-minute” paper.

At the end of a lecture

It is important to summarize the key points and direct students toward further learning. You may present the key points on a slide or overhead. Alternatively, you may go through the main headings on a handout. Students are encouraged to learn more about a subject if they are set tasks or exercises that will require them to look further than the lecture notes for answers and ideas.

Evaluating your lecture

A lecture can be evaluated in different ways. If the students are to be used as a source of feedback, the following methods are useful:

* Ask a sample of the students if you can read their lecture notes. This exercise gives some insight into what students have learned and understood

*Ask for verbal feedback from individual students.

* Ask the students to complete a one-minute paper.

*Ask the students to complete an evaluation questionnaire. If you want to evaluate your teaching style and delivery, peers can be a useful source of feedback.

* Ask a colleague to observe part or all of a lecture and provide feedback afterwards. It is important to inform the observer what aspects of the lecturing process you want evaluated, for example: • Logical flow, effectiveness of the media used
*Videotape the lecture for private viewing, and arrange a joint viewing with a colleague later

Advantages of Lecture

- Delivery of large body of content
- Addresses large audience group
- Minimum time and resource utilization
- Well structured and coherent
- Empowerment and sense of control by teachers

Limitations of Lecture

- Lack of active participation
- Lack of long-term effects
- Limited suitability to cultivate higher order
- Limited suitability for problem topics

References

- 1) *Abc of learning and teaching in medicine*, Peter Cantillon, Linda Hutchins, Diana Wood, 2003 bmj publishing
- 2) *Basics in Medical Education* Published by World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd 2003.

Al - Kindy Col Med J 2010; Vol.6. No. (1) p: II

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