

Study of students perception on group discussion as teaching method in medical education

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Abstract

Introduction: A group is an aggregation of people interacting in a face to face situation. Group discussion is considered a very effective method of health communication. It permits the individual to learn by freely exchanging their knowledge, ideas, and opinions. Group discussion provides a wider interaction among members than is possible with other methods^[3].

Methodology: 112 students of 4th semester were included in study. Students were divided in to two batches with 9 groups, each containing 6 students. Each group was given a topic and was allowed to present to other groups. Feedback was collected after discussion.

Results: In our study total 112 students participated. 36% (25%+11%) felt the topic for group discussion should have been taught beforehand. 54% agreed and 40% strongly agreed that this method helped in self directed learning. Around 85% (59+26) students felt that they could maintain a good rapport with teacher, hence improving their communication skills (58+36)% . 92% students enjoyed participating in group discussion, as students (89%) felt they had an assigned role in the group discussion, and it helped them (86%) to remember the contents of the topic better. 79% of students disagreed when they were asked whether working in a group confused them. 81% of students wanted more such discussions frequently minimum once in a month, and 75% felt that each group should not be more than 6-8 students. Over all 87% felt this method was student friendly.

Conclusion: Group discussion is one of the best methods of teaching in medical education, its student friendly, guides them to improve their communication skills, helps them to remember the topic better, and also enhances the mentoring in maintaining good rapport with the teacher.

Key words: Teaching, learning, group, participation, communication.

Introduction

Teaching without learning is just talking, there is no such thing as effective teaching in the absence of learning¹. Learning is process of acquiring information and it is still not completely understood. So also is teaching. It is said that students learn through different methods and not one method suits all, some learn by observation, some by listening and some by writing². Method of teaching has changed dramatically in recent years with the advent of LCD projectors, internet, smart phones, 3D printers etc. Many universities emphasize curriculum that promotes competency based learning and problem

solving skills. One such method is group discussion(GD). It is defined as an activity where group members learn through communicating and interacting with each other. It is a meeting of peers for discussion and exchange of views³. There should be a group leader who initiates the subject, helps the discussion in the proper manner, prevents side conversations, encourages everyone to participate and sums up the discussion in the end⁴.

Methodology:

Group discussion was conducted for 4th semester medical students studying in Kamineni Academy of Medical Sciences and Research Centre. Total of 112

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students participated in the group discussion. All the students were divided into two batches; in each batch 9 groups containing 6 students in each group. Each group was given a topic to prepare 15 days before the fore mentioned group discussion. Students were asked to gather information from standard textbooks and internet. They were instructed to discuss about the topic thoroughly and share their views to the group leader. The summary was presented by the concerned group leaders of that assigned groups and they projected through OHP by over head transparency

sheets provided to them. Students in other groups were asked to participate in discussion by asking questions, doubts, and any other information. All the while each group was monitored by the concerned teacher, and guided them in gathering information and helped in preparing summary and also in presentation After the completion of the session, a feedback form was given to each student and instructed them to complete the form and give suggestions. Feedback forms were collected, tabulated, and analyzed using Microsoft excel, graphs.

TABLE-1- showing results obtained from the study

S.NO	STATEMENT	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	BLANK
1	I think the topic for GD should be a new one	1(0.9%)	9(8%)	32(28.5%)	47(41.9%)	23(20.5%)	0
2	The topic should have been already taught for effective GD	7(6.25%)	26(23.2%)	37(33%)	29(25.89%)	13(11.06%)	0
3	I feel that this method helps in self directed learning	1(0.9%)	0	5(4.4%)	61(54.4%)	45(40%)	0
4	I feel this method helps us to develop rapport with teacher	0	3(2.6%)	13(11.06%)	66(58.9%)	29(25.89%)	1(0.9%)
5	I enjoyed participating in discussion	0	0	6(5.3%)	48(42.8%)	57(50.8%)	1(0.9%)
6	I find that groups work better as each student has assigned role in the group	0	1(0.9%)	9(8%)	69(61.6%)	32(28.5%)	1(0.9%)
7	I find that working in group confuses me	28(25%)	61(54%)	16(14.2%)	5(4.4%)	1(0.9%)	1(0.9%)
8	This method helped me to remember contents of topic	0	3(2.6%)	11(9.8%)	69(61.6%)	29(25.8%)	0
9	This method will improve communication skills	0	0	2(1.7%)	41(36.6%)	65(58%)	4(3.5%)
10	I find that the new method is student friendly	0	0	10(8.9%)	56(50%)	42(37.5%)	4(3.5%)
11	This type of GD should be conducted monthly once	1(0.9%)	2(1.7%)	13(11%)	51(45.5%)	41(36%)	4(3.5%)
12	I feel ideal no for the group discussion should be 6-8	1(0.9%)	4(3.5%)	19(16.9%)	55(49%)	28(25%)	5(4.4%)

In our study total 112 students participated. Students felt that the topic should be a new topic for group discussion 41% agreed and 20% students strongly agreed the idea, only 36% (25%+11%) felt the topic for group discussion should have been taught

beforehand. 54% agreed and 40% strongly agreed that this method helped in self directed learning Around 85% students felt that they could maintain a good rapport with teacher hence improving their communication skills (58+36)%. 92% students

enjoyed participating in group discussion (Fig 1.6), as students (89%) felt they had an assigned role in the group discussion, and it helped them (86%) to remember the contents of the topic better. 79% of students disagreed when they were asked whether working in a group confused them. 81% of students wanted more such discussions frequently minimum once in a month, and 75% felt that each group should not be more than 6-8 students. Over all 87% felt that this method of teaching was student friendly as it required active participation from each student.

Discussion

In our study we have found that students not only enjoyed participating in the group discussion but also benefitted from the discussion. They opined that lot of interaction among themselves and with other groups along with faculty made them confident in presenting the topic boldly. They also felt that routine stereotypic didactic lectures for some topics should be replaced with group discussions. Students wanted to participate in group discussions at least once monthly. Group discussions helped them in developing good communication skills and also remember the topic better. It helped to create a good rapport with the teacher. Similar findings were obtained by Dr. Sharmila S. Raut et al in their study⁴. It is important to distinguish between what is the consensus of the group, and what is the opinion of the different participants. The discussion leader played a very important role in creating a good atmosphere and ensured that all participants get an opportunity to contribute and that the proceedings are not dominated by any one person or group. Some limitations like more faculty, time factor, topics to be chosen for GD were the constraints.

Conclusion

Group discussion is one of the best methods of teaching in medical education. It not only helps students to develop good communication skills, but also encourages them to remember the topic better and to develop good rapport with the teacher. Present study population really enjoyed group discussion in order to enhance their assimilation of

knowledge and soft skills, but they are having problem to practise it regularly due to time restriction and lack of core concepts understanding. Topics with clinical significance like medico legal issues, Post exposure prophylaxis, preventing needle stick injuries etc. should be discussed in a group so that everyone as a individual and as a group get maximum benefit.

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