Design of an Educational Instrument to Develop Collaborative Learning Competencies in Junior Medical Students

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Abstract:

Background: Collaborative learning is an essential component of medical education. Global regulatory bodies in medical education advocate a collaborative learning environment for medical students. This has encouraged curricular reform towards small group, collaborative teaching and learning activities across the medicine program. Despite the positive reputation of collaborative learning we have yet to take advantage of the full potential of collaborative learning.

Methods/Design: The aim of the project is to develop and promote the critical collaborative competencies, which relate to effective learning in junior medical students. This research project is divided into two stages. In the initial stage, the critical collaborative learning competencies were identified. The student and staff perceptions about group learning are important in identifying behaviours which relate to effective collaborative learning. We conducted five focus group discussions with phase-1 medical students and eight semi-structured interviews with medical faculty members involved in small group teaching/facilitation. This data was collected till the data saturation was achieved. A modified Delphi was conducted to confirm, rank and prioritize the critical collaborative learning competencies for junior medical students. This information informed the design of the Collaborative Learning Development- Exercise tool (CLeD-EX) which constitutes the second stage of this project. The CLeD-EX tool has been trialled in the scenario group learning in the Aging and Endings- B course 2014. This trial generated an interest in phase 1 medical students and a total of 75 students completed the first CLeD-EX trial. Subsequently, we aim to evaluate the validity, reliability and the educational impact of the CLeD-EX instrument. Based on this information CLeD-EX will be planned for trial in future course.

Discussion: This research contributes to the existing literature by identifying the key collaborative competencies, which relate to effective learning and promoting these through a formative, feasible and structured educational instrument.