

Formative and Summative Assessment of the Problem-Based Learning Tutorial Session Using a Criterion-Referenced System

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ABSTRACT

Many medical schools have moved towards problem-based learning (PBL). Unfortunately, the use of PBL in many medical schools has not been followed with appropriate changes in evaluation of students. Assessment of PBL needs to focus on the objectives that PBL fosters in conjunction with the educational course objectives. In an effort to appropriately assess PBL sessions, The School of Medicine Tec de Monterrey uses a criterion-based system that includes three checklists: 1) tutor assessment of students, 2) self-assessment, and 3) peer-assessment. Each checklist contains criteria that correspond to the four objectives (rubrics) of PBL: knowledge application, critical thinking, self-directed study and collaboration, and a fifth rubric for professionalism and attitude during the discussion. Course objectives are integrated within each of the rubrics. The three checklists are used for summative and formative purposes in all PBL core courses of the Basic Medical Sciences department and for the Gynecology PBL core clinical course. Although no quantifiable data have been obtained, the use of this criterion-based system has helped establish appropriate standards of performance. Additionally, it has assisted in identifying those students who are having trouble developing critical thinking and decision-making skills and has greatly fostered feedback to students. If PBL assessment is consistent with curricular goals and course learning objectives, validity of assessment is enhanced and subjectivity across instructors' evaluations can be diminished.
