Implementation and evaluation of a self-directed learning activity for first-year medical students

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Introduction

- Pre-clinical curriculum must include self-directed learning (SDL) activities (LCME Element 6.3)
- Components of SDL include:
  - Identify learning gaps
  - Fill in knowledge gaps with credible sources
  - Share information with peers and supervisors
  - Receive feedback on information seeking skills

Purpose

- Assess implementation and effectiveness of SDL activity in a 6-week first-year medical student course

Methods

The Assignment

- Case studies in infectious diseases
- 38 teams of first-year medical students
- Annotate, cite scholarly sources, share information

The Evaluation

- Student survey: 5 Likert-style questions
- Pre-clinical curriculum must include self-directed learning skills, collaboration, application, and meta-cognition,

Results - Student perception of SDL activity

| I have acquired skills that contribute to my development as a life-long learner | Strongly agree | Agree |
| This project contributed to my learning new clinical knowledge | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
| I spent an appropriate amount of time on this project | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
| The workload on this project was evenly distributed among my colleagues | Strongly agree |
| All of my colleagues made significant and timely contributions | Strongly agree |

Table 1

- Selected student responses to the prompt: Please reflect on how this assignment affected your perception of your self-directed learning skills.
- Final codes with sample statements, themes, and theme definitions.
- We identified 14 final codes that we categorized into four themes: self-learning skills, collaboration, application, and meta-cognition,

Discussion

- Workload for the course director was feasible
- The time required to complete the activity was reasonable and a team-based approach was effective in evenly distributing the workload
- Students acquired new clinical knowledge and life-long learning skills
- Results of thematic analysis indicated that many students need assistance to develop SDL skills
- The theme, Self-learning skills, contained the greatest volume of students comments

Conclusion

- SDL activities can be successfully implemented in preclinical courses and are valued by students
- This SDL activity may contribute to the development of life-long learning skills for some students.

Future

- Administer SDL readiness assessment test to incoming first-year medical students
- Incorporate SDL activities throughout the preclinical curriculum

References


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