

## WORKSHOP REPORT

### Experience from a Communication Skills Workshop for Medical Students

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#### Context

Communication skill is one of the soft skills in professional development of future medical professionals. A good doctor needs not only knowledge but good effective communication skill in dealing with daily routine work as health care provider. Effective communication skills can be taught and learned. Based on these principles, a workshop on communication was developed by trainees of the Department of Medical Education, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia in collaboration with The Student Personal and Professional Development Programme (SPPDP) in achieving the university's programme objectives.

#### Reason for the idea

Medical curriculum must be holistic in manner with equal emphasis for medical students to develop and gain knowledge, skills and attitudes. Communication skills are one of the major attributes that students should be competent. Much evidence had shown that effective communication especially in clinician-patient communication results in significant benefits to the patients, the health care providers, the healthcare system and the country's economy in general. This workshop was developed to familiarize the year one medical students to the art of effective communication and its importance to their future practice and their daily encounters in life.

#### Methods

It was a half-day workshop, with the objectives to enable students to understand what is effective communication and its importance, describe various communication styles and barriers to effective communication, identify their own communication styles and its relation to their personalities. Video clips adapted from a movie were used to create awareness on multiple issues in communication. A communication style questionnaire was distributed to the students to help them identify their communication styles. Role-plays and interactive small group

discussion was chosen to create an enjoyable learning experience. After completion of the workshop students should be able to identify their own self-learning needs and strategies to improve their communication skills

#### Evaluation

A total of 150 undergraduate medical students participated in the programme. They were requested to rate the success of the programme via the feedback form. Data was analysed using SPSS 12. Majority of the students (81.4%) rated the workshop as useful and beneficial. About 84.3% of them rated the workshop as had achieved the objectives.

The workshop succeeded in creating awareness among participants of their difficulties in communication and the need to improve as seen in their written feedbacks:

*".....I need to improve my communication skills as I had been so used to be just a listener rather than to participate ....."*

*".....on how to change my attitude, that I like to avoid discussion and I love to be alone as I am not sure how to get along with others."*

In general, the workshop was well accepted by the students and further similar programmes should be continuously incorporated into the students learning activities to enrich and strengthen their communication skills. Apart from that, being actively involved, the trainees in Medical Education had the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice and critically re-evaluate their roles as effective facilitators.

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