

RESEARCH IN MEDICAL EDUCATION AT AUBFM: FOSTERING TEAM WORK



As part of the Impact Curriculum, Team Based Learning (TBL) was implemented in all courses in years 1 and 2 of the curriculum. This is an approach that is proposed to enhance active learning, application of concepts, problem solving, and teamwork skills. Yet, little evidence exists to support the last claim. This recently published research* addressed whether team performance skills are indeed improved by such a learning approach. A validated team performance scale (TPS) and peer evaluation forms for communication skills, professionalism and personal development were filled by students at different time points during the two years. Results showed that students positively evaluated most TBL sessions as promoters of critical thinking and appreciated the self-learning experience. In addition, there was a sustained and cumulative improvement in teamwork skills over time. These improved skills remained with students even after redistributing them into new teams. Similar improvement was noted over time in students' scores following peer evaluations of communication skills, professionalism, and personal development. The results support the suggestion, previously unsubstantiated by evidence, that TBL improves medical students' team dynamics and their perceived self-learning, problem solving and communication skills, as well as their professionalism and personal development.

* Zgheib, N.K., Dimassi, Z., Bou Akl, I., Badr, K.F., Sabra, R. The long-term impact of team-based learning on medical students' team performance scores and on their peer evaluation scores. *Medical Teacher*, 15 March 2016, Pages 1-8

CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENTS - NEW COURSES: PHYSICIANS PATIENTS AND SOCIETY

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Making "Good" Doctors: Bioethics and Medical Humanities at the AUBFM

Every year a class of doctors graduates from the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine (AUBFM). But what does society expect from these doctors-in-training? Is it still enough to treat patients and send them on their way? The Physicians, Patients, and Society (PPS) courses developed by the Salim-El Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program, AUBFM provide medical students with the comprehensive knowledge they need to become healers in the entire sense of the word: healers who see and interact with the patient behind the disease, with the loved ones behind the patient, and with society as a whole.

The PPS program extends from the first year in medical school and continues until the last, beginning with PPS1, which is comprised of four modules: medicine and history, art history, narrative medicine, and the first caring spotlight experience (CSE 1). This course provides students with extensive knowledge about the humanities and their relation to medicine, and through this knowledge engenders a better understanding of emotion, what it means to be a patient, and more importantly what it means to be human. During the highlight of the CSE 1 course, students are instructed to shadow a patient and discuss the experience in a written reflection. CSE 1 is meant to strengthen empathy in students through highly experiential learning. Based on the course evaluations, it seems to be achieving its objectives. A student explained, "Viewing things from a different perspective can really make a difference, and I'm thankful I got to understand and look at it from the patient's view. I learned things that I'm sure no book can explain. Experience was the best teacher and the lessons I gained will be carried for life." The module gives students the opportunity to experience things from the other side of the stethoscope. Another student elaborated that "compared to the other courses I took this block, PPS puts us in the position of the patient, where we are encouraged to feel and think about what a patient is feeling when in a diseased state, opposed to the rest of the courses which approach medicine more objectively than subjectively. This course has really opened my eyes and made me appreciate how patients feel."

In the second year of medical school, medical students join PPS2, which also consists of four modules. During the bioethics and patient care module, students develop the acuity for thinking about moral issues in the healthcare setting and formulate sound moral arguments to engage in discussion about these moral issues. The skills they learn during this module culminate in a mock Medical Center Ethics Committee (MCEC), which is meant to closely simulate the advisory board appointed by the hospital to review ethical issues that may arise during patient care (an advisory board they may be a part of one day). The students are then given two ethical cases and are instructed to discuss them in detail and provide their recommendations at the end of the mock ethical session. The second module, palliative care, exposes students to scenarios where patients are gravely ill. Here, the focus is no longer on treating and managing disease, but rather targets the patients themselves: their quality of life and their patient experience. The third module, spirituality in medicine, takes students beyond the psychosocial needs of the patient to consider a facet that is often ignored or neglected: their spiritual needs.

CSE 2 is another learning experience outside the classroom where students are instructed to shadow a nurse for a day at one of the inpatient care units. The experience illustrates the importance of the role nurses play in healthcare, as well as the relationship between the physician and the nurse. Students receive a first-hand experience whereby the best outcomes for patients result from clear communication and collaborative teamwork between doctors and nurses. They then are expected to hopefully extend this paradigm beyond nurses and onto all healthcare professionals. One student said that the course "introduces us to lessons that will help us handle our future experiences as physicians and brings to light many things that some of us have never even thought of or considered. It makes the students truly understand why physicians are called doctors. There is an entire spectrum of work that is expected from a physician so that he/she deserves the title of a doctor, and this course highlights this point to perfection."

During their third year, medical students attend PPS3 course through which they are introduced to a plethora of medical ethical issues. The course includes but is not limited to: ethics in public health, medical errors, the relationship between the physician and the drug industry, organ donation, and bioethics in obstetrics. At the end of the course, students are instructed to prepare and present an edutainment (amalgam of education-entertainment) video or documentary on a bioethics topic of their choice. The best submissions are then premiered at the multimedia SHBPP festival. When asked about the course, a student commented, "The course was beautifully prepared; it made us aware of ethical issues and rules that we were unaware of and could not read in any textbook." At the end of the course, students become familiarized with ethical issues that arise in the practice of medicine and the various approaches to ethical decision making. This coincides with the beginning of clinical work in the hospital for students, who can thus combine their immediate patient experiences with what they have learned in the PPS courses during their first three years.

The culmination of the three PPS courses is the fourth one, PPS4. Newly introduced this year, PPS4 runs as a part of the Family Medicine rotation. Once again students learn out-of-class at two resource centers, Tahaddi and Karagheusian. Students are placed outside the tertiary care setting in disadvantaged communities, giving them the opportunity to strengthen all the skills they learned during their first three years of medical school through on-the-ground interactions. The Physicians, Patients, and Society program is really one of a kind, combining in-class learning and first-hand experiences that help make well-rounded healers.