

Giving a Lecture

Myles N. Sheehan, SJ
Ralph P. Leischner Professor of
Medical Education

Goals

- Practical: nuts and bolts of preparation and evaluation of a lecture in the medical school curriculum
- Question: role of lectures in medical school curriculum and the responsibilities of faculty around the curriculum
- Concern: are we taking seriously the education of medical students to be physicians, or are we maintaining the status quo?

Practical Objectives

- Explain the role of course goals and objectives in developing the objectives for a lecture in a course
- Points to consider in decisions about material to include, handout preparation, AV aides
- Emphasize the necessity of practice before presentation: voice, posture, combined
- Highlight the role of feedback and evaluation and using it

Objectives Related to the Question

- Consider the goal of a medical school curriculum
- Consider how the curricular elements fit into achieving that goal
- Assess the responsibility of faculty in meeting that goal
- Discuss if we do that well enough at Loyola

Objectives Related to the Concern

- Consider if medical knowledge is diluted to mean only basic science
- Discuss if practice based learning, system based health care, and patient care are given appropriate attention
- Does our formation of medical students not always succeed because of a lack of clarity about the goals of the process?

Some Assumptions

- This presentation is about lecturing to medical students in a medical school curriculum
- I believe some of the material will be transferable to other audiences, but developing a lecture always needs to consider the context

Problems with Lectures

- Passive
- Can ignore expertise in the learners
- Requires a fair amount of preparation, standing in front of a not always appreciative audience
- Complexity of material may make it difficult for audience to appreciate

Advantages to Lectures

- Concentrated transfer of information, hopefully
- Provide a coherent thread to cover subject matter and serve as context for other learning venues
- Easier for senior faculty
- Teacher is in control and decides what belongs and what does not

Another Look at the Advantages

- **Concentrated**: but can the learner separate important from detail
- **Coherence** depends on cooperation of lecturers and attention to gaps and redundancy
- Junior faculty can be kept out of the loop: way to **maintain control**
- Faculty/lecturer **bias** can (in)advertently omit material: race/gender/topic---Geriatrics, end of life, minorities, economics---the lecturer controls what's important and can **exclude** not only information but much more...

Questions to Ask in Planning

- Where does the lecture fit in the course?
- What are the course objectives and what part does this lecture have in furthering those objectives?
- Where in the curriculum is the material preparatory for this information covered? How to avoid needless repetition?
- Is this a sensible lecture to be giving to medical students?
- Role of the course director in working with faculty

Planning

- Consider the goals of the lecture
- Write down the objectives
- Are these clear and realistic and do they meet the needs of the learners versus the needs of the lecturer? Will your lecture enable someone to meet the objectives or provide the tools to meet the objectives with further study?
- What must they understand---and why? Why is it important? Can you communicate this?

Audience

- Assuming medical students
- Differing levels of background in year one
- Unusual group of expertise---not just college graduates
- Do you respect the audience and view it as a privilege to teach?
- Are you going to serve them by doing the best you can do?

Preparing the Draft of the Lecture

- Develop the key outline for your presentation
- Consider the level of detail you need to make the point---review literature as needed
- Insert the types of examples, illustrations, anecdotes that make your point
- Make sure the forest can be seen despite all the trees
- Is this too much material for the time allotted?

What do we need to know?

- A very annoying question
- “Everything” is a very bad answer---and suggests the faculty member does not have a grasp of what is important
- Medical education needs to provide tools for self-learning but cannot expect learners to know all details
- Bias for “facts” may lead to poor patient care: if I cannot explain it in detail then I may not notice it...

Before You Give the Presentation

- Objectives: are they clear and do they have anything to do with the lecture?
- Have you provided the right evidence, detail, scholarship, examples?
- Highlight material that is essential---(e.g., use of imaging in falls in the elderly)
- What are the three points you think anyone who is awake will get

Style of Presentation

- Read lecture notes...usually dull
- Know the material so you can simply tell the story...tough the first few times
- PowerPoint: projected outline
- Outlines and handouts
- Assigned readings

Preparing and Performing

- Know your AV: microphone as well as other aides
- Visit the room if at all possible
- Practice voice, stance, combination
- Speed of presentation and projecting
- Caution with humor: bit like Russian roulette

Evaluation

- Immediate
- Delayed student evaluations---how I interpret
- Self evaluation
- Peer evaluation: wish we did this...we are very, very touchy about lectures and collegiality appears to be strict neutrality rather than a concern for excellence

Three Key Points

- Lecture objectives should be derived from the course goals and objectives
- The lecture should assist the learner in mastering the objectives, either via assimilating the lecture material or providing the tools for further study
- Lectures have important strengths and weaknesses: more robust peer evaluation might assist in developing strengths

Thinking About a Question

- Consider the goal of a medical school curriculum
- Consider how the curricular elements fit into achieving that goal
- Assess the responsibility of faculty in meeting that goal
- Consider if we do that well enough at Loyola

Goal of a Medical School

- Minimal goal is prepare students to become residents
- Prepare individuals capable of delivering health care over the next 50 years
- Do we meet this goal or hinder it with our curriculum?

Lectures

- Efficient way to transmit information
- Can be an efficient way to kill thinking
- There is a fairly large amount of material that must be mastered before the thinking is worthwhile!
- Lectures often good for that...

Lectures and Faculty

- Peer review as to relevance
- Peer review as to ability to stimulate learning
- Peer review as to potential for inherent bias
- Peer review ourselves to our commitment to our students and the public

Responsibility of Faculty

- What does professionalism mean for faculty?
- How does service fit into this (not talking about immersion trips)?
- Are our responsibilities to students always secondary to our interests (money, time, activities we want to pursue)?
- Do faculty have a responsibility to anyone but themselves? Sure, MD's do to patients...but what else?

More Deliberate Provocation

- Medical education as providing the information for hypothesis generation and observation
- Choice of material may lead important areas of health and patient care considered irrelevant
- What is the faculty's responsibility in caring about how education shapes the future?

Personal Experience

- Geriatrics, Palliative Care
- Care for older persons and those with life threatening illness is fragmented, devoted to acute episodes, lacking in knowledge, and clinicians do not seem to even see the problem
- How do we change this? You are all getting older. And we are all going to die.

Coming Clean

- A strong core of basic science information is essential for the practice of medicine
- The way we have organized the curriculum may not do much good for the sciences or for patient care
- Lectures need peer review...but we also need to think more carefully about the goal of forming physicians...and do our methods match what we hope to have happen.

Summary

- Lectures provide the opportunity for efficient transfer of material albeit in a passive format
- Lecture objectives should be developed in relation to course goals and objectives
- The point of a lecture is to provide the tools for the learner to master the objectives, not overwhelm with detail

Summary, cont.

- The choice of lecture objectives, materials considered appropriate for lecture, who gets to give the lecture, and what is included may contain a number of unquestioned assumptions
- Peer review has proven an important source in furthering intellectual inquiry
- Might it help our collegiality and curriculum as well?