Small Group Learning in Medical Education

MS4 Teaching Elective
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Educator perspective:

Benefits . . .

Challenges . . .
Small Group Teaching

• Active participation
  Teaching and learning brought about through discussion among all present (size)

• Face-to-face contact
  Effective discussion requires verbal and nonverbal communication (room setup)

• Purposeful activity
  Identify & communicate purpose/task (learning objectives)
Small Group Teaching includes:

1) Managing a small group –
   Personalities
   Learning Styles
   Cultural/generational differences
   Prior knowledge
   Student behaviors

2) Task – clarification of purpose, expectations, roles

3) Maintenance – open, trustful, supporting climate for discussion; responsibility of students & teacher
Managing: strive to have problems in group, solved by the group --

- Dominant group member
- Reticent group member
- “Jokey” or offensive group member
- Late or absent group member
- Over-dependent group member
Task: Structure in small group teaching

Develop clear learning objectives
Plan session
  -- proceed with a purpose
  -- flow of session
  -- time efficient / awareness / flexibility
Adapt role to task
Maintenance: Evaluating small group teaching and learning

Product – achievement of task(s); objectives of session met

Process – method used to achieve objectives
Did everyone in the group participate?
Did student(s) take responsibility for their learning?
Did the group work effectively?
(forms http://www.stritch.luc.edu/lumen/ )
Expectations of Learners

“in small group learning, the positive commitment of the individual learner is critical to it’s success.”

• Preparation
• Active and constructive contribution to session
• Effectively reflecting on issues raised
• Evaluation and feedback
Expectations of Teachers

• Prepare for sessions
• Try to be the first to arrive, not the last
• Initially, states objectives and initiates process
• Invites learner input and promotes discussion
• As group develops, facilitates a process in which learners together provide much of the initiative, explore options, test hypothesis, develop solutions, review outcomes
PCM EXPECTATIONS:

Students are expected to:

1. *Have good interaction skills.*

2. *Be prepared and participate in the group.*

3. *Demonstrate knowledge of the material or facility with the skill(s) taught.*

Faculty facilitators are expected to:

1. *Guide, not teach. They will adopt a non-directive policy thereby putting the responsibility for problem solving directly on the group.*

2. *Draw out points of view and comments from the members of the group.*

3. *Provide structure and conceptual summaries of the discussions so that the general "lessons" can be identified.*

4. *Attend all faculty development sessions to become the best facilitators and advisors possible.*
Summary –

Benefits of small groups:
• encouragement of independent self-learning
• critical thinking and problem solving
• awareness of the views of others

Successful small group learning:
• effective facilitators
• positive group atmosphere
• fostering of collaboration
• adherence to small group goals
• clinical relevance; promote problem solving