Title: Integrating the first year curriculum of Baqai Medical College amongst the basic and clinical sciences, through a parallel problem-based learning (PBL) track

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Introduction:

In Pakistan, medical education has been traditional, teacher-centered and subject-based, focusing on passive learning and subjective evaluations. In most of the Pakistan medical schools, agreement has been reached that a change in the curriculum is required. Keeping this in view, a focus group on curricular reforms was developed at the medical school with the goal of reforming the curriculum.

Objective:

This project aimed at reforming the curriculum of the medical school through integration of the basic and clinical sciences in a pilot group of students, incorporating PBL as a major teaching methodology.

Methods:

A parallel track was introduced in the year one of the medical school with selection of a group of ten students. The criteria of selection included a written test and a series of interviews. A core group of thirteen faculty members from the basic and clinical sciences, department's of medical education, IT and library was constituted to design the new curriculum. The assignments of the core group were to work on curricular reforms, conduct an orientation week for the students and organize faculty development programs. The curriculum was focused on problem-based tutorials and clinical sessions, reinforced through integrated lectures. Another feature was supervised community visits, where the students were assigned to work at the primary health care center's in order to foster community-based learning.

Results:

Two separate questionnaires were administered to the students and the core group of faculty, initially at the beginning of the new track and then re-administered 6-8 months later. The objective was to determine the impact of the new track on the knowledge, practice and attitudes of the students in the parallel track and the motivation of the core group of faculty towards the new curriculum. The analysis of the questionnaires showed a change in the knowledge, practice and attitudes of the students towards the new curriculum. Further the results of the formative and summative evaluations indicate the new curriculum as a great source of motivation for the students in the Parallel track.

Conclusions:

The project proved to overall very beneficial for the medical school. There has been a strong feedback from the faculty to be a part of the new curriculum. Initially the core group of faculty had only thirteen members, but now more and more faculty have strongly desired to join the group. The impact on the students has been to enable them to work as independent self-directed learners, a thing that is very uncommonly seen in the traditional medical schools. Further this track will go on to the second year of the medical school, while will be open for ten more students in the first year.

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