

Title: Improving the feedback skills of clinical tutors

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Context and setting: Feedback is one of the most powerful tools in the learning process, but it is often ignored in clinical teaching. In clerkships, feedback from tutors to students should be the cornerstone of effective clinical teaching, stimulating students to reflect on their experiences, critically analyzing them, and helping them to recognize their strengths and not achieved objectives. In this way, if the feedback is effective, the student can build deeper learning.

Why the idea was necessary: In spite of the importance of feedback in the clinical learning process, faculty often are not aware of its worth, supply it intuitively or simply do not provide it, losing many of the benefits that effective guidance may bring to students. As a result of this shortcoming, students "do not know they do not know," and repeatedly face practical exams making the same errors. Many of these skill deficiencies could have been addressed if proper, timely feedback from instructors was forthcoming.

What was done: We designed a workshop directed to clerkships tutors, consisting of two small group sessions, two hours long, where participants were expected to understand the role and importance of feedback as a teaching-learning tool, and to learn some strategies on how to give constructive criticism and advice to students. The participants were provided with a theoretical background concerning feedback techniques, oriented and trained through the use of videos, and then engaged in personal experience.

Surveys were given to workshop attendees regarding their perception of workshop content and the importance of feedback, and, subsequently, to students at the end of clerkships to evaluate their global perception of feedback received.

Evaluation of results: In a two-year period, we offered 14 workshops attended by 186 faculty members from different health careers. However, all staff from Paediatrics and Medicine attended, and comprise the analysis group (n=62).

After the workshops, most of attendees considered feedback indispensable and irreplaceable for clinical teaching; 80 % of them gave feedback (previously only 57% did so), and formal feedback was introduced officially in the program of 3 courses.

Student's surveys showed that almost all interns of medicine and paediatrics felt that feedback was extremely important. However, while 87 % of them claimed to have received some feedback, only 60% were able to identify some unachieved learning objectives or reinforced strengths.

Students in Medicine clerkship evaluated the feedback received more favourably than those in the paediatric clerkship, where the frequency and timing of feedback received was considered insufficient.

Although tutors who attended workshops recognize the benefit of feedback in clerkships, they still do not use it regularly and effectively.

The difference between the clerkship groups suggests the possible influence of others factors in the disposition of teachers that may constrain their provision of effective feedback to students.