

Title: Designing and implementing module for geriatric dentistry in undergraduate dental curriculum

Author: Suhasini Nagda

Introduction: Demographic pattern has shown a multifold increase in the number of elderly people in India. The current status has listed 76.66 million elderly people with a predicted increase making up about 12.5 % of the total population by 2026. Considering this fact, it became important to strengthen the overall healthcare needs of the ageing populace. Oral and general health being inter-dependent, an earnest need was felt to educate the undergraduate students in this aspect. Bearing this in mind, it was thought to develop a well structured competency based module to empower the students to efficiently serve the graying population at the community level.

Methodology: KERNs model of Curriculum development was used to develop the module. Problem identification and general need assessment was carried out with the help of a questionnaire put to the patients and discussion with faculty members. Based on the findings, a pre-test (PALMORE'S FACTS ON AGEING QUIZ) was answered by under-graduate students to gauge their current level of knowledge on ageing. Analysis of the data showed that the students scored 15/25 (60 %) correct responses on an average which prompted to create a structured educational module so as to improve the understanding of the students.

Educational strategies implemented to develop a comprehensive module included interactive teaching-Learning methodologies like Didactic lectures which focused on ageing , geriatric pharmacology , oral aspects of ageing and treatment planning for the geriatric patients, Role-playing, demonstrations and one minute preceptor . Visit to home for the aged was also included to understand the reality at the ground level.

After implementation of the above, a feedback was taken with a post test (PALMORES' FACTS OF AGING QUIZ) which showed that the students on an average scored 19/25 (76 %) correct responses. This indicated a statistically significant improvement in the knowledge of the students. Competency assessment was evaluated in 4 categories – Personality and Behavior, Communication skills, Diagnostic and Clinical skills and interprofessional reference of the targeted group under observation of the faculty was also undertaken. It was seen that the students were not efficient in dealing with inter-professional reference. The continuous focused deliberations with the faculty brought about a great deal of involvement helping them to grow as a group during the project.

Conclusions: The following facts were highlighted in the study:

1. Undergraduate students knowledge and skills managing the elderly needs to be improved.

2. There is an urgent need to implement a Geriatric dentistry module which will initiate students to take an empathetic approach towards this group.
3. The module needs to be implemented as early as 2nd year BDS so as to make early lasting impressions.
4. Further considerations at 3rd and final year BDS stage would empower students to treat the elderly with total understanding.
5. This would entail creating fully trained young doctors who can confidently deal with the aging population and render efficient service to the society.