Title: Strategy of introducing teachers’ evaluation by students in Mali’s medical school

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Context and setting: Mali, a French-speaking country in Africa has a single Faculty of Medicine. This faculty has 6000 students who were taught by 200 teachers in 2010. Teaching is mainly by lecture, as is true in most French speaking countries in Africa. In these schools professors are never evaluated by other faculty members or students.

Why the proposed change was necessary: Without a system of evaluation of university instructors by peers or students, there is no way to document formally the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty or identify areas for improvement of teaching skills.

What was done: We asked the faculty for their consent to be assessed by their students. Seventy-two faculty were identified and 64 (89%) agreed to be assessed by their students. 158 students evaluated the quality of teaching of these teachers using a questionnaire with 17 Likert scale items. The items covered, presentation of objectives, communication skills, enlisting students feedback, enthusiasm for the topic, use of visual aids and summary. Because evaluation of teachers by students had never occurred before and represented a culture change within the school and the country, care was taken to assure students that there would be no negative repercussions should they give low ratings to a faculty member.

Evaluation of the results or impact: From the analysis of the questions, it was possible to document for every teacher his (her) strong and weak points in lecturing. After reviewing the results of the evaluation, a large majority of the teachers expressed interest in correcting their weak points for the next academic year; they also asked for training in pedagogy.

Based on positive feedback from the faculty, the Dean decided to conduct this evaluation for all teachers in the future. Students also responded positively and expressed an interest in providing this evaluation of all teachers in the future to motivate them to improve their teaching competence. These pilot results have also led to a plan for faculty development in pedagogy.

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