

Title: Designing a community-based-education module for undergraduate dental students

Author: Nazik Nurelhuda

What problem was addressed: The burden of oral disease in Sudan is on the rise, despite the expansion in dental education. There has been a growing interest among dental educators globally regarding the opportunities offered by community-based dental education. It is thought to support dental students to assume their role as health professionals in the real world and within their communities. Dentists generally do not engage in community work upon graduation. This could be a result of the orientation they receive during their education. Out of more than 25 schools of dentistry in Sudan, only one has adopted a community based education (CBE) curriculum.

A shift from status quo to CBED may not be appealing or feasible to most schools. This study, following an evaluation of the situation, proposes a re-structured feasible model.

What was done: An Evaluation of the existing community based training (school health program SHP and convoys) was conducted. A concurrent mixed methods design was used. Staff and students from seven schools were selected to represent perspectives from governmental (3), private (2) and para-statal universities (2), only one of which followed a community based education (CBE) curriculum, while the others were community oriented (CO) curricula. The faculty in-charge of running the SHP and convoys were interviewed through a structured focus group discussion. Students completed a self-administered questionnaire to measure the impact of training on the student's understanding of the community, social responsibility, their role as change agents, personal experience, ethics and soft skills acquired. These findings were used to design a community based module to be injected into the present dental program.

What was learned: It was found that all schools did not have written learning objectives or learning outcomes for their community based training, with the exception of one school. Only one other school assessed their training and that was through a written exam, for others only attendance was required. 154 students from community oriented schools, and 70 from the community based schools participated in the evaluation. Students were found to report a more positive experience from convoys compared to SHPs, and this could be a result of the longer time spent in the field. Students benefited more from pre-field training. Both students and staff showed interest in the re-structuring of the module. A CBE orientation workshop was conducted for faculty from all schools and their feedback on how to re-structure the program was used in the design of the new module.

As a follow-up to this study, the new module will be piloted in one university, with a pre-post test evaluation.

Reference:

Smith, M., P. Ash, et al. (2011). "Outreach training: the special interest group's report." *Eur J Dent Educ* 15(2): 85-89