

Building Quality in Small Group Presentations

BACKGROUND:

In 2007, UMMSM implemented a new time slot and teaching format for the Human Structure Module. It is now taught as the first course in medical school and runs concurrently, for two months, with Doctoring.

Human Gross Anatomy is a major part of this first teaching module in medical school. The novel part of this training is a faculty supervised, small group, active-learning, peer-teaching format in the laboratory.

Role of students in new teaching format: Students are divided into four groups based upon Academic Societies and then rotate from being teachers of laboratory content material in one laboratory session (e.g., anterior thorax, etc.), and then learners in the next three labs (e.g., mediastinum, anterior abdominal wall, and abdominal viscera), and the process repeats. These roles have been carefully orchestrated and refined by the course director at another institution, and have been adapted to the larger class size at UMMSM. Each dissection group is designated by a color (red, blue, green, purple) for ease of crowd control. Each group is assigned a particular dissection that they must perform under faculty supervision. The following laboratory session they then present this material in small groups to the rest of the class. Three successive presentations are required (40 min each) to train the remaining parts of the class but this is easily accomplished in the assigned laboratory hours. The ratio of student teacher: learner is 1:1-2 which is ideal for interactive learning. Students quickly learn to augment their prosection demonstrations with other teaching aids such as charts, tables, drawings, hand-outs, models, and relevant medical images.

This new peer-teaching format is classic “in-service training” that students are exposed to later in medical school.

Objectives for Student Teachers:

1. Briefly introduce teaching objectives and format of small group learning
2. Building learning expectation (e.g., use of relevant stories, anecdotes, etc.)
3. Outline (learning objectives, body of presentation, wrap-up)
4. Use of eye contact, questions, etc. to engage learners
5. Use of adjunct teaching materials (charts, tables, brief hand-outs, models, medical images, etc.)
6. Learning theory: The best learning is fun (Joyful learning is best) because new information is remembered best when paired with a strong, positive emotion.
7. Involve all members of the group and engage all learners equally.
8. Save the last few minutes of each session for a “tell-back” using round-robin question and answer format and reflecting on learning objectives. This will stimulate interest, participation and advanced preparation on the part of learners.

9. At the end of the learning session, the learners need to leave knowing the material in the objectives, and how these relate to the overall topic.

Objectives for Student Learners:

Learn the **SIX STEPS TO ACCELERATED LEARNING** (** From: Accelerated Learning Techniques, Brian Tracy (Nightingale Conant)

1. Improve your state of Mind (Resourcefulness):

- Motivation
- Reduce stress
- What's in it for me?
- Visualize yourself as successful, hear appraising comments, etc.

2. Intake of information:

- Take in information using as many senses as possible (Active/multisensory learning)
- Learning styles
 - 25% auditory learners
 - 35 % visual learners
 - 40% kinesthetic learners

3. Explore subject: (play with the information):

- Put in own words
- Draw pictures
- Learning maps
- Explain to others

4. Memorize

- Note cards
- Review material often and with as many senses as possible
- Transmit information to subconscious mind (i.e., just before bed)
- Frequent breaks (study sessions should pause every 20-30 min.)

5. Show you know

- Perform self-review
- Group discussions
- Integrate information into conversation

6. Reflect on information and learning experience:

- How could learning experience be improved, fine-tuned.
- Ask questions, ask questions, ask questions.....
- "Feedback is the breakfast of champions"