

DEPARTMENTAL EXERCISE AIMED AT IMPROVING LECTURING ABILITY OF LECTURERS

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ABSTRACT: Lectures are the most common methods of transmitting information in almost all schools, colleges and universities. Even in an era of e-learning it has continued to hold its significance. It has received considerable criticism in recent years due to poor lecturing abilities of the teacher that has resulted in poor learning outcome by the student. Nevertheless it is an integral part of teaching and it cannot be omitted from any kind of education. In the medical education reforms laid down by the Medical Council of India, much has been stressed upon small group teaching, hands on training and practical, yet the lecture has retained its place. Lecture is a type of passive large group teaching and much effort is required by the teacher to add adequate spark to his/her lecturing ability by rehearsing in self or among friends or by self-improvement through feedback received from students or peers. A good lecture leaves an indelible and cherished memory in the mind of the student.

KEYWORDS: Lecture, method, criticism, passive, teaching.

INTRODUCTION: Past reviews of research on lecturing and its significance have revealed that lectures are as effective as other methods of teaching in presenting information and providing explanations. Though students enjoy practical clinical classes, lectures cannot be a substitute for practical work. Exercises aimed at improvement of learning through lecturing have revealed that brief lectures can be more effective. Decades ago the classical lecture was enjoyed by both students and teachers but now the age of e-learning, advancement of syllabus and time constraints have produced changes in attitudes towards lecturing. Didactic oral presentations are of no use to a student who cannot visualize what is being taught.

Students usually regard those lectures as "good lectures" where examination oriented topics are dealt with and "good notes" are provided. Science students prefer compact notes than students of Arts who require lengthy notes hence the concept of "good notes" varies from subject to subject. Science students usually see a lecture as a portal of entry for something they intend to study and learn whereas Arts students utilize a lecture in understanding something they have already read. Students learn from lectures by listening, following, understanding, and note-taking. An understanding of the topic can be related to during and post lecture.

A student who has read the topic prior to attending the lecture can understand during the lecture and some students understand better by going through lecture notes and text simultaneously at their leisure. Strategies have to be undertaken to improve the quality of a lecture by improving lecture preparation, transmission, student reception and output.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS: Two hundred MBBS students in Katihar Medical College were asked to attend a lecture in two groups of one hundred students each, in two different lecture theatres at two different times of the day.

Each student was given a questionnaire containing the following questions. Students were instructed not to write their names or class roll numbers and to provide genuine feedback/comments as far as possible.

01. Topic of the lecture
02. Duration of the lecture
03. Time at which the lecture was taken
04. Level of preparation of the lecturer
05. Clarity and expression power in voice of the lecturer
06. Utilization of various teaching aids
07. Intermittent questioning by the lecturer
08. Correlating the lecture topic with practical/clinical aspect
09. Style of concluding the lecture
10. Lecturer promoted students to ask questions

Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, taught on the same day. The topics were related to their specialities. The lecture timings and lecture durations were different.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION: The result of this exercise is displayed below.

Q. No.	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
01	+	+
02	-	+
03	+	-
04	+	+
05	+	-
06	-	+
07	+	+
08	-	+
09	+	-
10	+	+

Table showing the opinion of students as + or –

It is well recognized that what teachers teach and what students learn may not be the same and this applies to all parts of the undergraduate medical curriculum.^[1] The major advantage of the lecture is the ability to teach pertinent up-to-date information in an efficient manner.^[2] Students usually learn what they are asked and not what they are taught. Analysis of our study reveals that a lecture is interesting to the students if it covers topics that are examination oriented and during the lecture problems areas are dealt with.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

In today's era of various guide books and preparation style of students based on solving previous years question papers students usually "choose" to attend lectures dealing with topics that are commonly asked in the examination. Duration of lecture is an important parameter in judging the effectiveness. Ideal duration of a lecture should be forty-five minutes^[3] and the lecturer should try to summarize key points before concluding the class as the peak concentration level of the listener falls after the first twenty minutes and rises during the last twenty minutes. Teacher 1 delivered a lecture on ninety minutes while Teacher 2 delivered a lecture of 50 minutes.

Duration of a lecture should not exceed the attention span of the listener. Students usually prefer attending morning or forenoon lectures as compared to afternoon or evening lectures. Quality of attention depends on several factors including time of the day. ^[4] Lecture timing of both lecturers was 9am and 4pm for Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 respectively. Lecturers should be well prepared for the class and also well versed with the topic they intend to lecture on. The lecturers should create a comfortable and non-threatening environment during the lecture. Clarity in voice and ability to express facts was exhibited by both lecturers. Use of voice coupled with expression enhances the delivery of a lecture.

Teacher 2 was deficient in this domain. Utilization of various teaching aids available in the lecture theatre saves time and gets the message across swiftly. A lecturer who can comfortably switch between various audio-visual aids while continuing his lecture maintains the smoothness of delivery. It is less time consuming in displaying information rather than drawing or dictating the same. Teacher 1 was deficient in this domain. Lecturers should encourage the listeners to ask questions and to share their views or ideas. This method keeps the audience lively and promotes healthy interaction during a lecture which usually becomes boring due to its passivity. Lecture topics become more interesting if practical/clinical orientation is provided alongside for interpretation.

Teacher 1 simply delivered a didactic lecture whereas Teacher 2 mentioned several practical/clinical aspects alongside. Finishing off a lecture effectively is as important of beginning it well. While concluding, Lecturer A gave a snapshot of the topic delivered in the lecture but Lecturer B remained deficient in this domain. Both lecturers promoted students to ask questions to enhance the learning outcome. It is important that students discuss their deficient areas with the lecturers after the lecture is over. This provides elimination of any remaining doubts that may clog the learners' mind.

CONCLUSION: Lectures will always prevail as a useful tool for imparting large amounts of knowledge to a large chunk of students in a sequential manner and in a specified time frame. Interactive teaching-learning methodologies are required to produce competent physicians. Lectures do have limitations and they can become boring and unproductive if the lecturer simply recites from the text book. Teachers should be willing to improve their lecturing abilities and have a clear insight with what they plan to achieve at the end of their lectures.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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