Trainees’ Feedback on the Prevailing Teaching Methods in Postgraduate Medical Institute, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, Pakistan

Irum Sabir Ali, Mumtaz Khan, Atifullah Khan, Muhammad Fahd Shah and Gohar Ali

ABSTRACT
Objective: To determine the feedback of postgraduate (PG) trainees on their current teaching methods and their level of satisfaction with those at a tertiary care hospital in Pakistan.

Study Design: Cross-sectional study.

Place and Duration of Study: Department of Surgery, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, from January to May 2010.

Methodology: A semi-structured proforma was filled by the trainees regarding teaching methods and preferences. Level of satisfaction was measured by five points Likert scale. Results were processed through SPSS 17.0 for descriptive statistics.

Results: The response rate was 260 out of the total 268 trainees. Lecture / tutorials were reported as the major method of teaching by 239 (91.9%), bedside teaching by 229 (88.1%), journal club by 217 (83.5%), e-learning by 157 (60.4%), audit meetings by 152 (58.5%), interactive sessions by 144 (55.4%), radiology meeting by 101 (38.8%) and TOACS by 39 (15%) trainees. Out of 28 units, TOACS were practised as a teaching method in 3 units. It was noted that 47 trainees (18.1%) graded the current training to be unsatisfactory, 127 as fair (48.8%), 77 as good (29.6%), 9 as very good (3.5%) while none considered it to be excellent. TOACS was the most preferred method of teaching, reported by 239 PGs (91.9%). Excessive work load as a cause for the dissatisfaction was reported by 229 trainees (88.1%), inadequate teaching by 157 (60.4%), lack of motivation 124 (47.7%), inappropriate teaching 122 (46.9%) and personal problems by 118 (45.4%).

Conclusion: Lecture is the most commonly used method of teaching in the Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, while TOACS is the most preferred method amongst trainees, but it is the least practiced.

Key words: Teaching method. Clinical teaching. TOACS. Trainees. Postgraduate medical students.

INTRODUCTION
In recent years, postgraduate medical education has witnessed major changes in the structure and content of postgraduate (PG) medical training world over. For postgraduate trainees on-job clinical teaching is the core of their professional development. The ideal setting for clinical training rarely exists even in developed countries. Nonetheless, teaching and learning environment can be developed towards proper training. It has to be based on teaching methods, while helping the trainees to get through the postgraduate examinations would yield young clinicians with effective clinical reasoning and critical thinking skills.

The different approaches instituted for postgraduate teaching and learning in a clinical environment are likely to be associated with improvement in execution of various outcomes such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and the overall clinical behaviour. Due to the heterogeneity of the clinical components, it is important that the training in general should be a blend of different teaching styles that may prove effective for a variety of learners with varying preferences. The teacher-centred, old-fashioned postgraduate teaching approach is being replaced by a self-directed and a learner-centred approach.1,2

It is imperative to analyze the ways clinical training is being conducted in our set-up and how the trainees perceive their training and what are their preferences in the current circumstances. Based on this, the present study was conducted to identify the prevailing trends in teaching in the Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI) and the modifications that need to be made in the postgraduate training programme to cater to the PGs preferences and requirements.

METHODOLOGY
This cross-sectional study was conducted in various units of Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, from 15th of January to 14th of May 2010. It was initiated after approval by Institutional Research and Ethics Board (IREB). FCPS trainees of all years were included in the
study. A semi-structured proforma was made consisting of close ended questions for the year of training, number of trainees in the unit, methods of teaching being used. The methods inquired about included lectures/tutorials, bedside teaching, journal club, interactive sessions, radiology meetings, audit meetings, e-learning and asked to specify if any other was being used. Level of satisfaction was rated through the five point Likert scale, where 1 was unsatisfactory and 5 was excellent. The reasons for dissatisfaction questioned in the proforma included excessive work load, inadequate teaching, inappropriate teaching, lack of motivation, personal problems and any other. Lastly, the respondents were asked to specify the most preferred method of teaching, through an open ended question. The proformas were given to the trainees after taking informed consent and assuring confidentiality. The proformas were filled by the trainees themselves and subsequently collected by the authors.

The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 and presented in the form of table. Descriptive statistics were obtained in the form of frequency and percentages.

RESULTS

Of the total 268 trainees who were given the proformas, response was received from 260 trainees i.e. a response rate of 97%. The number of trainees in the units was < 5 in 8 units, 5-9 in 9, 10-14 in 10 and > 14 in one unit respectively. Eighteen and a half percent of responders were in the 1st year, 35% in the 2nd year, 21.2% in the 3rd year, 10% in the 4th year while 15.4% were in their 5th year of training. In response to inquiry about the methods of teaching being used in their respective units, lecture/tutorials were the most common method used i.e. by 239 participants followed by bedside teaching by 229 trainees. Internet access and e-learning was reported by 157. Journal club was reported as a method of teaching being used by 83.5% of the postgraduate trainees (PGs). The other academic activities reported by trainees in order of frequency were audit meetings by 152, interactive sessions by 144, radiology meeting by 101 and least of all task oriented assessment of clinical skill (TOACS) by 39. Out of the 28 Units, TOACS were practised as a teaching method in only 3 units. Regarding the level of satisfaction, it was noted that 47 trainees (18.1%) considered the current training as unsatisfactory, 127 as fair (48.8%), 77 as good (29.6%), 9 as very good (3.5%) while none thought it was excellent. The overall satisfaction rate was 82%. Excessive work load was the top most cause responsible for the dissatisfaction of the trainees. It was regarded as a reason by 229 trainees (88.1%). The other reasons have been shown in Table I. In response to the inquiry about the top three preferred methods of teaching, TOACS was on the top as reported by 239 (91.9%), followed by interactive sessions by 220 (84.6%) and bedside teaching by 210 students (80.7%).

**Table I:** Reasons for dissatisfaction among trainees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate teaching</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate teaching</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal problems</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

Rapid changes are occurring in biomedical sciences in the recent years. Fifty percent of the current knowledge will prove to be wrong in next 3-4 years. Therefore, continuous process of learning is required for teachers and students to keep updated with the fast occurring changes. Various monitoring systems have been adopted to find the effects of teaching on postgraduate education in medicine. One of the methods called PHEEM (Postgraduate Hospital Educational Environment Measure) has been successfully used in this respect. In this study lectures were the most commonly employed method. This is similar to the findings of Kalkat et al. who reported that lectures have been preferred by postgraduate trainees (PGs) since it felt that the 3 important parameters of teaching and learning i.e., knowledge, skill and attitudes were well inculcated by lectures. It has been reported that year of the training may influence the choice of teaching method among PGs regarding satisfaction with various methods of learning. Another study reported that year 1-3 trainees wanted less lectures but the year 4 were satisfied with the nature of lecture given in a specific period of time. PGs of all 4 years wanted more workshops and they perceived lectures to be least helpful and workshops as most helpful.

In this study, irrespective to the year of training, the participants reported to have a preference for more task-oriented and interactive methods. In this context TOACS was the most preferred method as it helped them to be better prepared for their exams, followed by interactive sessions and bedside teaching. In this study, bedside teaching was reported to be practiced by 229 (88.1%) and was also regarded as one of the preferred methods of teaching. A study by Williams reported that students believed that bedside teaching/learning is valuable for essential clinical skills; however, this method of teaching was found to be inadequately utilized. Generally less time is now spent on bedside teaching worldwide with a shift to conference rooms and corridor teaching, besides mini-CEX, role plays etc. The reasons for this change were evaluated in a study by Ramaniet al. According to them teachers believed that unattainable level of diagnostic skill is required that creates intense
performance pressure, that bedside teaching is not valued by students, that teacher lacks the skill of bedside teaching and that erosion of teaching ethics have been observed.

E-learning technologies are increasingly being used to develop interactive curricula on key aspects of evidence-based medicine. This method of learning is not limited by time and geography and can easily be incorporated in clinical practice. Clinically integrated teaching improves knowledge, skill as well as attitude. Journal club as a learning tool, reported by more than 80% of the PGs, is one of the oldest methods of learning. The earliest reference found is in 1835-1854 in the biography of Sir James Paget. Cushing described Osler’s Journal Club in 1875. It is one of the best methods to stay abreast of the new developments. Journal clubs are also used more recently as a tool to teach critical appraisal skills, research design, medical statistics and epidemiology.

Alguire has reported the Journal club as educationally diverse yet adoptable for teaching new basic sciences. Interactive sessions can be held in small groups for case discussion, opportunity to teach and practice skills and reported by about half of the respondents. A Cochrane review of 32 skill studies revealed that 24 of those were helpful to improve professional skills.

TOACS/OSCE provides direct observation and feedback to students on their abilities to take a focused history and physical examination. It has been reported as an efficient tool of learning. In this study, this tool was found to be less utilized. The concept of OSCE has been used in some hospitals where situations are designed and students are put to real practice. This is important due to the cultural differences around the world.

New method of simulation technology has come into play and has been regarded as the most effective method of learning. It is not currently being practiced in the local PG training programme.

CONCLUSION

TOACS as a method of teaching was the most preferred amongst the trainees but it was least practised. It is recommended that the clinical teachers may consider this as a priority method of teaching in their training programme for the satisfaction of trainees.

REFERENCES


