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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTEGRATED TEACHING AND DIDACTIC LECTURES: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Background: Indian Medical Council, the governing body for medical curriculum has recommended for integrated teaching in medical school in addition to traditional teaching. This is employed in all medical colleges in varying degree. Students' opinion on this method will be useful to decide on how much to teach using this as they are exposed to different methods of teaching.

Objective: To evaluate students' perspective about integrated teaching in comparison to didactic lectures

Methodology: A questionnaire survey was done using about 200 student of II MBBS third semester students. A validated questionnaire was given to each student and the responses were obtained. The data were analysed by descriptive analysis.

Results: Sixty three percent of students felt integrated teaching to be more effective than didactic lectures. Eighty one percent of students opined that integrated teaching could give a more complete idea and better understanding of the disease management.

Conclusion: Students felt that integrated teaching has advantages like better clinical relevance and interesting than traditional one.

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INTRODUCTION

A harmonious approach by combining or coordinating separate elements is the literal meaning of Integration. Integrated teaching has been implemented in medical education as per the suggestion of the Medical Council of India(MCI). This method of teaching allows students to see the interconnectedness and interrelationships between the curriculum areas. It provides the students a deeper understanding of content through purposeful and relevant learning.¹

The traditional method of didactic lectures on various topics results in unnecessary repetition, difference in opinions and hence the subject as a whole is never grasped.² Hence the MCI encouraged integrated teaching between traditional subject areas using a problem based learning approach starting with clinical or community cases and thereby exploring the relevance of various preclinical subjects to help in understanding and resolution of the problem.³ The regulations of the graduate medical education 2012 also suggested integrated teaching to bridge the gap between theory & practice, between hospital based medicine and community medicine.

Integrated teaching has been implemented and is being continued in almost every medical college in India. Like other methods of teaching, this method has its own limitations. Students can critically analyse this method as they are exposed to different methods of teaching. So, the present study was undertaken to know about the students' perspective about integrated teaching in comparison to didactic lectures

Methodology:

The study was conducted among the third semester students of Kasturba Medical College, Manipal University, Manipal. A total of 200 students took part in this survey. This group of students were selected as they had been exposed to both lectures as well as integrated teaching in their second as well as third semesters. The students were given a questionnaire after obtaining their consent. The questionnaire included questions regarding integrated teaching and its comparison with didactic lectures. The findings of questionnaire were analysed descriptively

Results:

Regarding usefulness of integrated teaching and didactic lecture, no significant difference was found as shown in table1.

Table 1, showing usefulness of two methods of teaching (Percent)

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful
Usefulness of didactic lecture	25%	59.2%	15.7%
Usefulness of integrated teaching	27.2%	55.5%	17.4%

Questions regarding effectiveness of two methods were in favour of integrated teaching (Table 2). 63% of students felt integrated teaching to be more effective than didactic lectures. 81.5% of students found that integrated teaching could project a more complete picture and understanding of the disease process and its management.

Table 2, showing effectiveness of two methods of teaching (Percent)

	Yes	No
Is integrated teaching more effective than lecture	63	37
Is integrated teaching helpful in projecting a more complete picture of understanding the disease process and its management	81.5	18.5

Table 3 shows the students perception regarding different parameters in two methods of teaching.

Parameters	Didactic lecture	Integrated teaching	Not able to decide
Good understanding is achieved by this technique	44.6	46.7	8.7
As a student I was comfortable with this teaching technique	48.4	39.7	12
Discussions held in class helped in understanding the subject better	39.7	48.4	12
Students were given an opportunity to clear their doubts	43.5	37.5	19
Teacher's explanations were simplified and clear	50	33.7	16.3
The clinical applications of the topic were explained by the teacher(s)	29.3	59.2	11.4
The relevance of topic to other branches of medicine was also explained	22.3	66.8	10.9
This teaching technique encouraged my intellectual curiosity	31	54.3	14.7
I expect to score better in this topic as a result of this teaching method	48.9	37	14.1
The knowledge and skills acquired about this topic via this method will help my clinical practice	27.2	59.2	13.6
All topics must be taught collaboratively by multiple teachers of different departments	27.2	62	10.9

Discussion:

Integrated teaching gives a holistic description of a topic. Just emphasizing on a part and not the whole makes teaching ineffective. It involves teachers from different disciplines to come together and teach about various dimensions of the same topic. For this interdepartmental planning, cooperation and spending a lot of time is required. This study was done in department of pharmacology which is having integrated teaching classes with other departments like physiology, pathology, community medicine and medicine.

By teaching about the different aspects of same topic, the teaching becomes complete and interesting. If students understand a topic in depth, it creates curiosity to know more and generates an interest in learning. The results

suggested that integrated teaching could explain the clinical applications better, improved their curiosity about the subject, helped them gain knowledge as well as skills which would help them in their clinical practice. Most of the students (62%) suggested that all topics must be taught collaboratively by multiple teachers of different departments. However almost an equal percentage of students were comfortable with both methods of teaching and found that both methods of teaching helped them understand the subject better, and helped them clarify their doubts. The students being comfortable with didactic lectures is because they are used to this method from their school time. So it will takesome more time before they find integrated teaching also the same. In didactic lectures, students find that they get an opportunity to clear their doubts and that the teacher's explanations are simplified and clear. This can be due to the fact that with more than one teacher in a class they have little inhibition in asking questions. This can be overcome by putting open ended questions and asking them about their opinions time to time during integrated teaching.

Discussions in integrated teaching help them to learn in a broader perspective. As integration was with clinical departments as well, the students found that the clinical applications of the topic were stressed more. The relevance of topic to other branches of medicine or the clinical implication of topic was appreciated by students. Like earlier studies⁴, the students in this study found that integrated teaching method was effective.

Students feel that they can't score better with integrated teaching. This is because in exams the questions asked are the conventional ones which are based on recall and have very less clinical relevance. So there is a need to change question paper pattern and make them clinically relevant.

Though students still are getting used to this method of teaching, they find all the long term advantages in integrated teaching like better clinical relevance, interesting and overall wholesome knowledge. From faculty perspective, planning and collaborative efforts are important prior to designing integrated lectures.⁵

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