



Fostering critical thinking through active learning: the snowball method

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INTRODUCTION

According to Competency Based Medical Education curriculum of National Medical Commission (NMC), the interactive teaching sessions must make up two-thirds of the class schedule. Snowball Discussion is an interactive and collaborative technique which starts with the introduction of a clinical challenge to individual learners and then proceeds by doubling.

Aim: To study the perception of learners for Snowball technique in Microbiology.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A mixed method was used for conducting Snowball teaching session on 'Hand hygiene' at Department of Microbiology, MM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Ambala, Haryana. Total 75 learners attended the session because it was conducted in practical session for time issues. The facilitators sensitized the learners about the Snowball technique after which the session was conducted step-wise.

RESULTS

A total of 75 learners submitted the feedback form. All 75 respondents (100%) had attended a Snowball session for the first time. Respondents were asked to rate the Snowball session on a 5-point Likert Scale (1=Highly Unsatisfactory; 2=Unsatisfactory; 3=Neutral; 4=Satisfactory; 5=Highly Satisfactory). Feedback was obtained from the learners using an online feedback form. There was a high level of satisfaction among the learners regarding the session. 74 (98.67%) respondents agreed that attending the Snowball session generated their interest in the topic and they were able to better correlate the topic clinically. 72 (96%) respondents agreed that after attending the Snowball session they were motivated to read further about the topic and that a Snowball session was better than a traditional lecture.

STUDENTS FEEDBACK

- I liked this method of learning more than just listening in a lecture."
- I like learning this way because it's more engaging and I learn more.
- This learning process made it easier to understand the connection between theory and practice; I would like to learn in this way all the time.

MY REFLECTION

- The snowballing activity was successful, but more success could have been achieved if students understood learning objectives and used time wisely.
- SMART lesson planning tools as advised by Savage (2015) and Benes and Alperin (2018) and the four stages of lesson planning as advised by Gill, (2002) and John, (2007) should use to reduce time management mistakes and facilitate effective learning.

CONCLUSION

One interactive teaching and learning strategy that can be used to introduce clinical correlation to undergraduate medical students is the "Snowball" technique. This teaching method can be readily modified to fit particular topics that are incorporated with clinical subjects.

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