



Developing and Validating Modules for Communication Skills for MBBS Students

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Type of Publication: Original Research Paper

Conflicts of Interest: Nil

Abstract

Introduction: Communication with a patient is the basic art that a doctor has to inculcate. Certain etiquettes have to be followed and discernible speaking skills have to be achieved. Introducing specific programs at the undergraduate level will benefit the students and instill confidence in them for dealing with patients in future. It is frequently noted that students having good communication skills do not find it difficult to convey and impart their knowledge. Therefore this workshop was conducted step-wise so as to make the students acquainted with the needs of the medical profession. The communication skills to be developed include both verbal and non-verbal skills. Efforts were made through workshops to stress on the development of rapport building, active listening for the patient's perspective and responding to emotions.

Objectives: To develop and validate modules for communication skills at the three levels of the MBBS teaching program.

Methodology: The study was conducted in our institute after getting Institute Ethics Committee clearance. Workshop modules were developed for first, second and final MBBS students and circulated for validation to medical teachers and private practitioners. The workshops were conducted for the

three levels based on these modules. Feedback was also taken from the students and faculty at the end of each workshop, and improvisations were done for future workshops as needed.

Results: Students and faculty members' feedback forms were studied and graphical data was prepared according to the study. The students felt the need for conducting communication skills workshops at regular intervals throughout their MBBS career. Overall the workshops proved to be of a great help to the students.

Conclusion: Inculcating appropriate communication skills from an Under Graduate level may help the students to do well in their viva, as well as communicate effectively with patients.

Keywords: Communication, Speaking skills, Validate modules, Undergraduate level.

Introduction

Communication with a patient is the basic art that a doctor has to inculcate. Certain etiquettes have to be followed and discernible speaking skills have to be achieved. An early realization of the need for developing communication skills is extremely pivotal in achieving the same. Introducing specific programs at the undergraduate level will benefit the students and instill confidence in them for dealing with patients in future. Moreover, this program should be conducted step-wise so as to make the students acquainted with the needs of this profession.

Apart from the clinics, a major conundrum facing the medical students is the much-dreaded viva. Knowledge regarding a particular subject might be helpful while giving a theory examination, but not necessarily so during a practical one. However, if a viva examination does not go well, it doesn't imply poor knowledge of the subject. It is frequently noted that students having fairly decent communication skills do not find it difficult to convey and impart their knowledge. It sets them apart from the students who don't possess similar skills; the operating difference being-confidence levels. Therefore teaching of communication skills has to be integrated in the medical school curricula.¹

In a culturally and economically diverse country like ours, communication skills aren't uniform either. It might be an arduous task for students coming from the states having low socio-economic status and literacy rate. Even before facing a patient, medical students need to be able to learn to communicate with their peers and teachers. The communication skills to be developed include both verbal and non-verbal skills. Undergraduate communication skill workshops will help students in overcoming the hurdles of this tricky yet crucial aspect of the occupation. Efforts have been made through various research programs to stress on the development of rapport building, active listening for patient's perspective and responding to emotions.^{2,3}

Objectives

To develop and validate modules for communication skills at three levels of the MBBS teaching program.

Methodology

The study was conducted in our institute after getting Institute Ethics committee Clearance.

Workshop modules were developed for first, second and final MBBS students and circulated for validation to medical teachers and private practitioners.

Students and facilitators feedback was also taken and same useful suggestions were incorporated into the method of conducting some of the sessions

Workshop Modules for Communication Skills For MBBS Students

Level I – Conducted for first MBBS students

Lecture on communication skills and barriers of effective communication.

The class was split into small groups of ten with one facilitator (teacher) each.

The following were done:

Introduction of each student

A game for ice breaking

Each member in the group spoke extempore for one minute on a given topic

Group activity

Feedback from the students and facilitator.

Level II – Conducted for second MBBS students

1. Speaking skills in viva were demonstrated by “Role Play” and lecture.

2. History taking – Lecture

3. Prescription writing – Lecture

4. Explaining prescription in the patient's language – Role play by students in small groups where each group is given a different scenario.

5. Feedback from students and facilitator.

Level III – Conducted for Final Year MBBS students

1. Etiquettes in communication – Lecture

2. Handling difficult clinical scenarios in OPD, wards, camps – Through role play by students in small groups.

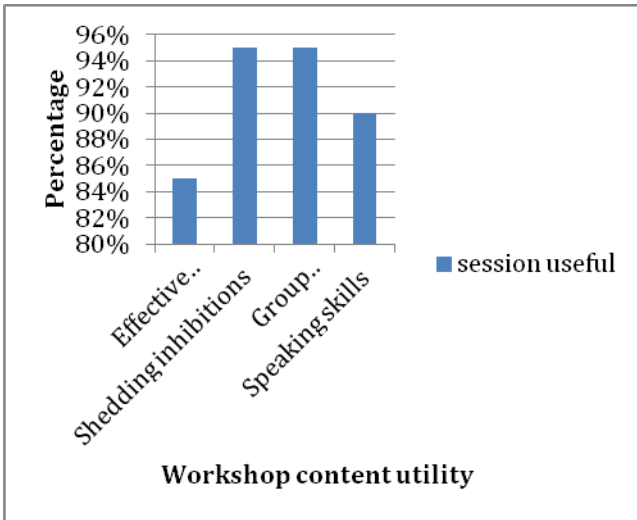
3. Written communication – Maintaining case records and writing discharge summary- Demonstrated through a lecture

4. Oral communication – Making presentations for conferences and seminars (Powerpoint presentations, Posters) Demonstrated through a lecture.
5. Feedback from students and facilitator.

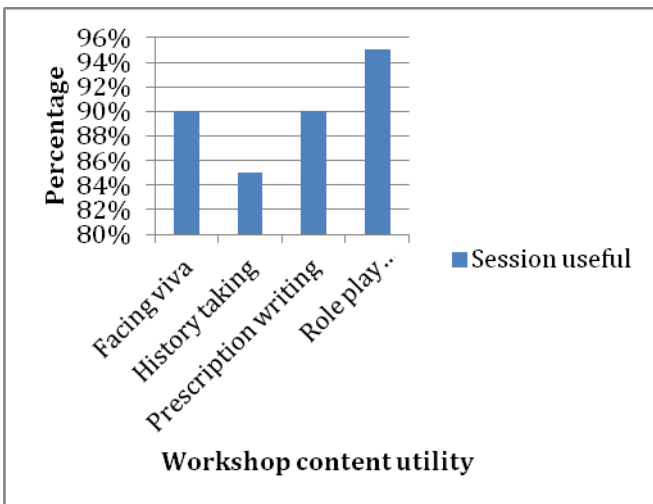
Result:

Graph 1: Communication workshop level I- 5 workshops conducted

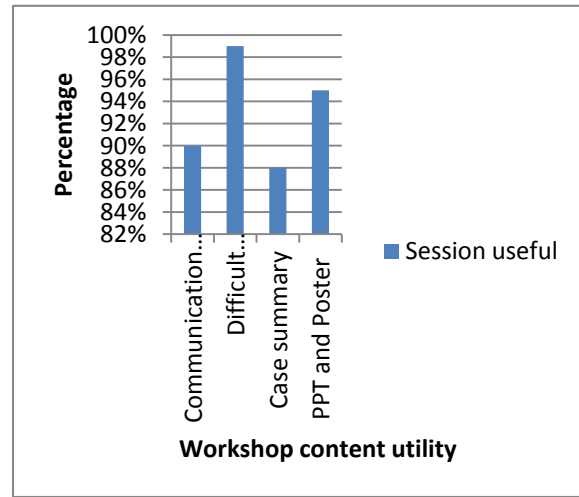
1: Communication workshop level I- 5 workshops conducted



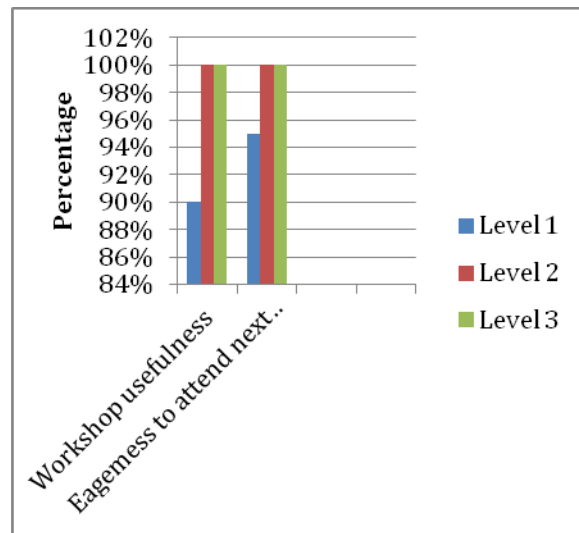
Graph 2: Communication skills workshop level II- 4 workshops conducted



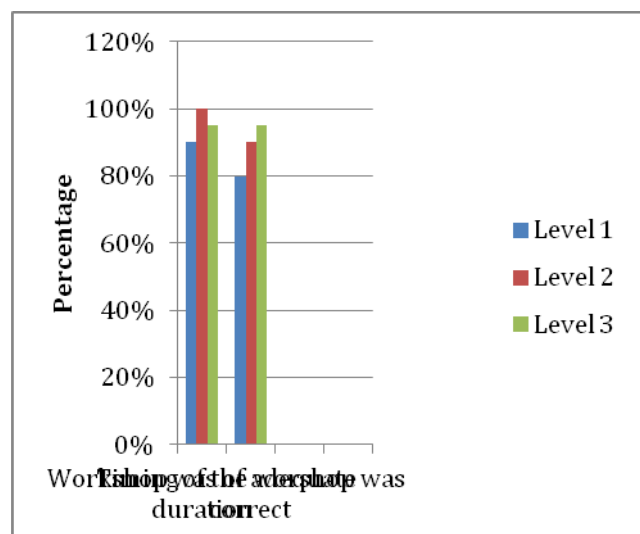
Graph 3: Communication skills workshop level III- 2 workshops conducted



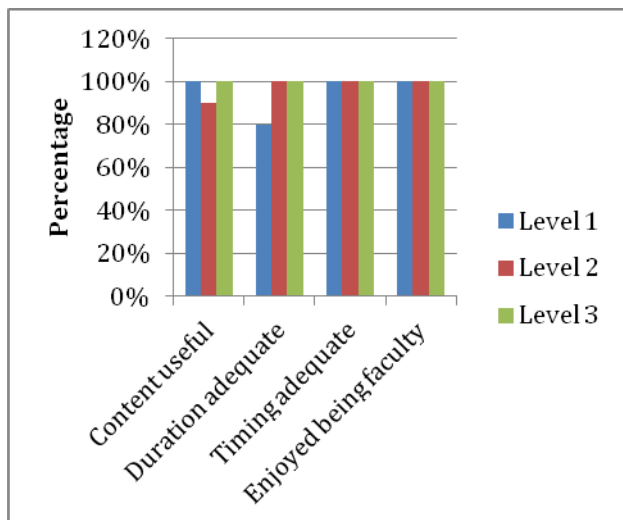
Graph 4: Usefulness of the three workshops



Graph 5: Duration of workshops



Graph 6: Faculty feedback



Discussion

It has been seen in the past few years that there has been a huge progress in the medical field. However a major deficiency was observed regarding the communication skills. Studies have proved that effective interviewing and communication skills can not only be learnt but also forgotten.^{4,5} Along with such an advancement in the clinical branch a need was felt on improving the communication skills of the professionals so that they get an easy way to interact with the patients and convey the information required in a better manner. Part of the doctor's task is to help the patient understand the information so that the patient may help himself.⁶ Good doctors communicate effectively with patients. They identify patients' problems more accurately, and patients are more satisfied by the care they receive.⁷ Doctors should look confident while delivering any kind of information. They need to be convincing enough for someone to believe in them.

Inculcating appropriate communication skills from a UG level may help the students to do well in their viva as well. Looking at the increasing competition these days, students need to be more confident regarding their

knowledge. Comparative studies have been made with the intention of analysing the difference in the communication skills of first year students who are amateur and final year students who have attended the curriculum.⁸ It was found that their communication skills improved remarkably by final year

Research suggests that students have expressed a need for conducting communication skills workshops at regular intervals to make them aware of the problems they can face, be it an examination or dealing with a patient. Effective studies have been done where the communication.^{9, 10} Our students expressed their views on the workshops saying that the faculties at the workshop were able to clearly elaborate their sessions. Along with this they said that the contents of the sessions had a logical continuity with the previous sessions conducted for them. Moreover the undergraduates expressed their wish on emphasizing more from the exam point of view. Overall the workshop proved to be of a great help for the students and the faculties themselves agreed on the difference they saw in the students' performances after these workshops.

Conclusion

The three communication skills workshops for MBBS students at first, second and final year MBBS levels were very useful for the students. Such workshops are the need of the hour and should be introduced in the curriculum.

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