



Role Play in MBBS Teaching Curriculum on Ethical Issues – an Experience

KEYWORDS

Role play, Medical education, Feedback

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The existing teaching system focuses mainly on the knowledge of the students while neglecting their psychomotor and communication skills. The new medical curriculum lays emphasis on teaching learning methods, which are student-centric and interactive.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted by the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, among VII semester MBBS students. In order to sensitize the students towards social and ethical issues, Role Play was done. A pre-designed and semi structured feedback was obtained from the students regarding their experience.

Results: Majority of the students found the sessions very interactive and friendly. In the feedback, most of the students (97.9%) mentioned that the Role Play was interesting. 89.5% students were of the opinion that the objectives for each session were achieved. According to 87.2% students there was proper utilization of audio-visual aids, 91.8% said that time management was appropriate and 91.9% opined that the quality of the content was up to the mark.

Conclusion: Role Plays have an important role in educating present and future doctors and should be more widely incorporated in medical schools especially in developing countries.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, undergraduate teaching curriculum in medical schools has undergone extensive change keeping pace with the advancements in the field of science and technology. Lecture is the traditional way of teaching undergraduate students. It is a passive teaching learning method, used to impart knowledge to large classes of students. Although it is a convenient mode of teaching, it does not involve active participation of the students. The end result of such teacher-centered classes is, lack of concentration of the students and their decreased learning ability.¹ Moreover the existing teaching system focuses mainly on the knowledge of the students while neglecting their psychomotor and communication skills.

The new medical curriculum 2012 lays emphasis on teaching learning methods, which are student-centric and predominantly include small group learning, interactive teaching methods and case based learning. It has also incorporated development of ethical and humanistic values as an integral part of undergraduate curriculum.² Teaching and learning aspects of ethics requires a deep understanding of the topics especially those areas which involve feelings and emotions. Medical humanities (MH) as a subject, has been incorporated in the curriculum of very few medical colleges in India. MH explores the human side of medicine.³

Van Ments (1989) defined Role Play as "...one particular type of simulation that focuses attention on the interaction of people with one another. The idea of Role-Play is that of asking someone to imagine that they are either themselves or another person in a particular situation. In essence, each player acts as part of the social environment

of the others."⁴ To generate more fun and interest among students, Role-Play is used as a training method to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills in a range of disciplines especially in field of medicine.⁵ The present study was undertaken to explore Role Plays as a new teaching learning methodology and to obtain students' feedback and suggestions for further improving the use of Role Plays in future.

METHODS

The study was conducted among VII semester medical undergraduate students of the Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences, Puducherry, India. We taught the topics related to social-ethical issues on Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, Pre-Conceptional and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act, infertility and surrogacy laws in India. In order to sensitize and educate young medical undergraduate students towards such social and ethical issues, a new method of conducting these sessions was conceived and therefore the Role Play method was chosen followed by group discussion.

The topics were covered in two sessions of two hour each. For the use of different teaching-learning methods, at the start of each session the students were briefed about the topics to be discussed. Then there was a Role Play by the faculties followed by panel discussion and in the end group discussion among the students and the faculty. A pre-designed and semi structured feedback was obtained from the students regarding their experience. In the feedback, the students were also asked to write any suggestions if they had regarding the Role Play. We then tried to evaluate Role Play by analyzing the feedback from the

students. Informed verbal consent was obtained from the participating students. Identity of the participants was kept confidential. Data were entered in Microsoft Excel 2007 and were analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Averages were calculated and chi square test was applied to find the significant difference in the awareness among different groups. P value of <0.05 was taken as statistically significant.

RESULTS

Majority of the students found the sessions very interactive and friendly in comparison to the regular didactic lectures. Of the 86 students, 40.7% of the students, rated as excellent and 48.8%, as very good, regarding the achievement of objectives. When asked about the time management, 52.3% rated as very good and 39.5% rated as excellent. Similarly 73.3% of the students found the quality of the content as very good and 51.2% rated score two for the appropriate use of audiovisual aids.Regarding the overall rating for the sessions, majority of the students (59.3%) rated very good, followed by excellent (40.7%).

One very important finding of this study was that, majority of the students felt that the Role Play was a useful teaching learning method and a very practical way for discussion on ethical issues in medicine. (73.3% students rated as excellent and 24.4% students rated as very good). The majority (59.3%) of the students marked the overall rating for the sessions as score two, followed by score one (40.7%).(Table 1)

Feedback on the sessions	Score (1=excellent, 2=very good, 3=good, 4=fair, 5=poor)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Time management was appropriate	34 (39.5)	45 (52.3)	6 (7.0)	1 (1.2)	-
How was the quality of the content?	16 (18.6)	63 (73.3)	7 (8.1)	-	-
How will you rate the Role Play?	63 (73.3)	21 (24.4)	2 (2.3)	-	-
Achievement of the objectives	35 (40.7)	42 (48.8)	6 (7.0)	3 (3.5)	-
Proper use of audio-visual aids	31 (36.0)	44 (51.2)	7 (8.1)	4 (4.7)	-
Overall rating of the sessions	35 (40.7)	51 (59.3)	-	-	-

***Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages**

Students' suggestions for further improvement are reported in Table 2. Almost half of the students (51.2%) found the Role Play very interesting and useful and therefore did not suggest any modifications. Moreover 20.9% of them demanded that such sessions should be done more frequently. However 24.4% of the students felt that the matter discussed was less 1.2 % found the Role Play very lengthy.

Suggestions	N	%
No suggestions	44	51.2
To be done more frequently	18	20.9

Should give more information	21	24.4
Role Play was lengthy	1	1.2
Session should be more interactive	2	2.3
Total	86	100.0

Students were then asked at the end of the two sessions, for their opinion regarding this novel teaching learning methodology. Their feedback was quite encouraging as majority (76.7%) found the Role Play very interesting and knowledgeable. While 40.2% students said that the message was properly conveyed. None of the students gave a negative feedback. The major advantage as perceived by the students was that the method demanded their active participation and interaction with their teachers. (Table 3)

Comments	n*	%
No comments	11	12.8
Role Play was interesting	66	76.7
Interactive session	38	44.2
New method of learning	24	27.9
Message properly conveyed	35	40.7
Better understanding of the ethical issues	16	18.6

* More than one option possible

DISCUSSION

Traditionally, teaching of undergraduate students revolves around lectures, practicals, tutorials, and clinics. These are all passive mode of teaching, with hardly any interaction among students and teachers. Studies have shown that it is necessary to inculcate professional and ethical behavior among young medical students in order to improve and sustain the health of the population and community at large.⁶

Following the sessions, there was definitely an increase in the knowledge along with development of communication and presentation skills. The topics chosen were existing social and ethical issues. Furthermore, the topics were discussed in detail, during the group and panel discussion by the students and the faculty. The main highlight of each session was the Role Play which created interest among the students. The findings of our study show that 89.5% of the students were of the opinion that the objectives for each session were achieved. According to 87.2% students there was proper utilization of audio-visual aids, 91.8% said that time management was appropriate and 91.9% opined that the quality of the content was up to the mark. In the feedback, most of the students (97.9%) mentioned that the Role Play was interesting and was the main strength of the sessions.

On the basis of our findings, active teaching-learning method especially the Role Play generate interest among students,changes the perspectives on subjects, opens up new avenues of thinking and moreover it is a change from usual way of learning which many students find refreshing. According to another study by Chauhan et al, among the sixth-semester medical undergraduate students found that active participation of students makes them to learn in a better way than the normal classroom teaching.⁷Similar findings were reported in other studies done in India where Group discussion increased active participation of students and was more student-centric than conventional teaching methods.^{8, 9} In another study done by Mishra et

al among 72 students of VI semester medical undergraduates, 62.5% of the students rated as very good regarding the achievement of objectives of the tutorial class. The majority of the students felt that panel discussion was interesting (70.7%).¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The positive feedback by the students in our study raises the need for restructuring of teaching methodology in medical schools for better understanding of existing ethical issues in developing countries. Incorporation of active learning techniques like Role Play for classroom activities not only helps in improving students' participation and communication skills but also ensures sensitization towards various existing community health issues in our country. Role Plays have an important role in educating present and future doctors and should be more widely incorporated in medical schools especially in developing countries.

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