Team Learning in an intensive course format for 1st Year Medical students

Does it make the best even better?

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Beitrag

Purpose: An evaluation of a pilot course using Team Learning in Year I of the human medicine curriculum at the Medical University of Vienna indicated that many students feel basically comfortable with this novel instructional strategy, although a sequence of multiple learning activities should be used rather than single unit assignments (Plass H, Wiener H, Kremser K, März R. ZFHd. 2004; 5:31). Based on this and other things we learned we designed a new course.

Methods: Year I of the curriculum covers two semester modules, each divided into three successive teaching blocks. In the first semester of the academic year 2004-05, Team Learning was offered to students in Block 3 - From molecule to cell - as a single 2-hour group exercise designed simply to illustrate the value and dynamics of a learning team. In the second semester, six intensive 2-hour sessions over a three day period using the Team Learning format were provided as an elective covering many learning objectives of Block 4 - Functional systems and biological regulation. The course started seven weeks after the Block, and two weeks before the final summative integrative exam at the end of Year I.

Results and conclusions: The standard electronic evaluations indicated that many students were unable to handle the one-shot approach used in Block 3. By contrast, the reaction to Team Learning in the intensive course format of Block 4 was highly positive. 588 out of 1417 students entering semester two signed up for the courses. Eventually, 386 students (66%) participated in the eight parallel courses offered. In the evaluations, 90% of the 262 responding students were very satisfied and felt that Team Learning is an efficient, motivating strategy (74%), improved their specific knowledge in the field (70%) and had a positive influence on their learning attitudes (56%). Indeed, using the Year I final exam as an outcome measure, the 220 students who completed the Team Learning intensive courses of Block 4 and took the exam averaged a 25.3% higher score in the corresponding exam block, though they also had higher scores (mean 16.5%) in all other blocks. In fact, of the 220 students 31.1% passed the final exam, whereas the fraction of the total student population who passed was considerably lower (17.2%). Taken together, Team Learning in the intensive course format seems to be especially attractive for the best students of the year making them even more successful in the key exam.

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