

Analysis of Reflective Writing of 3rd Year Medical Students during the Pediatric Clerkship

Abstract

Background: Reflection creates an understanding of the self and the situation so that the future actions can be informed. It helps in self-regulated and life-long learning. Guided reflection with the help of a mentor may help medical students entering their early clerkships, challenge their assumptions, and consider new perspectives. **Methodology:** This is a descriptive report of analysis of reflective writing in the logbooks of the year 3 medical students in pediatrics. Students were requested to identify any significant event in the wards or classroom each week and write a brief reflective report. Mentors had weekly meetings with them and discussed the reports. The reports were classified into four themes (related to children and caregivers, learning, motivation, and miscellaneous) after content analysis. **Results:** Sixty-six logbooks were analyzed. Twenty-five students did not write reports on one or more weeks. There were 29 reports on children, 18 on caregivers, 20 on how students derived inspiration from children and caregivers, 20 on empathy, 24 on upsetting events, 8 on bad experiences of caregivers, 62 on learning, 9 on motivation, and 3 on miscellaneous matters. **Challenges:** Regular and weekly mentee meetings and discussions are required for meaningful reflective reports. Language posed difficulties in expression. **Conclusions:** Reflection helped students to be more aware of what is going on in the wards and address troubling issues by discussion with their mentors. It helped mentors gain an insight into students' perspectives and concerns. Regular mentee meetings helped to establish rapport with mentors and submission of proper reflective reports.

Keywords: Medical students, pediatric clerkship, reflection

Introduction

In Latin, the reflection means “to bend” or “to turn back.”^[1] Peter Drucker opines, “Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come, even more effective action.”^[2] There is increased emphasis on reflection in undergraduate and postgraduate health professions education. The process involves: a trigger (an event or situation) – thoughts are “turned back” – interpreted and analyzed – there is increased understanding or awareness – these insights are used in the future in similar events or situations.^[1] As Kolb believed that reflection is essential for learning, his experiential learning cycle which is an ongoing process included “concrete experience – reflection – abstract conceptualization – active experimentation – concrete experience.”^[3] Reflection, an essential aspect of lifelong learning,^[1] guided by mentors in a safe environment will become an integral part

of the gradual process of building up experience.^[2] Reflection is a useful tool for learning, developing a therapeutic relationship with people seeking health care and their caregivers and to develop professional practice.^[1] Reflections are used to prepare health-care professionals of the 21st century to function in complex and changing health-care systems, to continuously update their knowledge and skills, for solving complex health-care problems.^[4] At present, our 3rd year students have to pass the examinations in all the clerkships; however, an overall, combined pass score in the theory and clinical examinations is adequate to proceed to the next year. Therefore, there is a tendency among our students toward rote learning with an emphasis on theory, neglecting acquisition of clinical skills. In Malaysia, graduates have to spend 4 months in pediatrics during the 2-year internship when they may be the point of first contact with sick children. Reflective writing was introduced to stimulate them to think about the clinical environment critically, which

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