

Editorial

TEACHING SKILLS IN FORENSIC MEDICINE & TOXICOLOGY

Abstract

Here are some practical suggestions to improve the teaching in forensic medicine and toxicology; though many of the suggestions can be used in other specialties too. These suggestions are based upon experience of pioneers in the field of teaching as well as my own experience gained by feedback from the students and micro teaching.

Keywords: Teaching skills; Learning; Pedagogy

Forensic Medicine and Toxicology is a baby subject as compared to other established subjects in the graduation curriculum of MBBS in India. Before it could grow up and fly its wings were clipped by the MCI. They reduced the marks from 150 to 100 and reduced the teaching hours from 150 to 100 teaching hours including the practicals and demonstration of post-mortem cases and clinical cases related to clinical forensic medicine. Under these existing circumstances it becomes imperative that we gain the acumen to impart necessary knowledge in this short span of time.

We must lay emphasis that more teaching hours are allotted to the subject of forensic medicine so that students can learn the basic working knowledge as well intricacies of medicolegal work. For this we have to lay stress on more practicals and on hand training in medicolegal cases as in clinical subjects. Show students all types of clinical medicolegal cases. Students should participate in post-mortem examination work. They should be exposed to doing the dissection, be conversant with the normal looks of the organs and the variants of normal look.

Toxicology section is the most ignored section in this field. More stress should be on Practical teaching of diagnosis and treatment of poisoning cases. Treatment of the poisoning cases should be done by same doctors who are going to teach this subject to the undergraduate students. Teachers sometimes are apprehensive about teaching toxicology because they have never seen or treated cases of poisoning.. Expose juniors to practical work in the field of toxicology. There should be more Poisoning control centers from where one can have instant information if he or she is geeing difficulty in diagnosing and treating the poisoning cases.

The most important way is to have maximum number of class tests. Writing and speaking skills must be developed in the students. Students with impaired fluency in expression either in writing or verbal expression are seen as poor students in the subject. More class tests and examinations make them interested in the subject. Written tests help to develop writing skills. Frequent viva and tutorials sharpen the verbal expression skills. It is the repetitions which will make a student learn in a better manner. Internal assessment should be transparent and

should be based upon these tests and tutorials. They should be asked to prepare projects so that they understand the importance and practical utility of various topics.

Examination in the subject of forensic medicine should be along with clinical subjects as forensic medicine is a clinical subject and in this knowledge of all other clinical subjects is a prerequisite. More marks allocated to the subject of forensic medicine as the students put more emphasis on subjects with more marks. Syllabus needs to be modified to include more relevant information and delete obsolete topics. Many poisons have become obsolete and many other chemicals which can be used as poisons needs to be introduced in syllabus.

Teachers should also try to improve their teaching pedagogy. They should develop the necessary skill of imparting education. They should not be self-conscious while teaching. Teachers are centre of attention in a class but skillful teachers make the topic of teaching centre of attention. They should be the students themselves always learning the new and better techniques of teaching. Have feedback from students regarding the way you and your faculty teach them. Analyze the feedback given by students. Students have goals and desires. In this feedback we must differentiate these desires and goals. Teachers have to help the students to attain their goals but desires may not be realistic. Implement positive feedback after analysis. We must produce pedagogy according to the needs of the students. In this way you will feel the happiness of teaching reaches to its peak when your students will be satisfied.

While teaching the students in laboratories for all lab tests have Standard operating procedures and paste them in the labs. These procedures should be performed before these are demonstrated to students and professor should check it that there is no problem while these tests are being demonstrated to the students. Student should also have hand on experience in doing these tests. Point out mistakes by students in practical note book regularly. More one to one contact with the students should be observed as far as possible. There should be interactive teaching.

Supervise teaching of juniors and give them useful hints for improvement. Have regular journal club meetings and seminars in faculty even if there are no postgraduate students. Make the faculty love the teaching and implore them to continuously update their knowledge by reading new books and journals. They should be encouraged to attend conferences and CMEs.

Students have ignorance and inexperience and teachers have to make them enlightened with their knowledge and experience.

Teachers have to learn pedagogy the teaching behaviors. "Pedagogy is not synonymous with method or technique but includes everything a teacher is and does when teaching and getting ready to teach. Learning of the students is facilitated by teaching." [1] We must emphasize what they need to know. We must facilitate learning rather than cramming.

All the teachers have the beliefs how the teaching should be done. Teaching needs to be done on scientific basis rather than individual beliefs which have no scientific rationale.

Thinking is learning and teacher should make a student think. Learning is languaging. [2] "Verbal materials are on the whole, the handiest and most useful material in which thinking can be carried out. Abstract conceptions are far and away the most economical instruments of thoughts and abstract conceptions are fixed and incarnated for us in words. [3] There are students who say that they are poor in expression because they are not good in language. If they are allowed to express in native language which they know the best will be able to explain

the things, Language is a medium to transfer our knowledge and teachers should work on this aspect to improve the vocabulary and grammar of the language in which education is being imparted in a particular institution. They should make the students learn by thinking. Students have the thinking skills but we should endeavor to develop thinking habits in them.

Whatever a teacher wants to teach on a particular day he must have a clear concept of the topic. If anything is doubtful must discuss with the pioneers and colleagues to remove any doubts rather than venturing into ambiguous terms and styles. It is always prudent to say that I am not clear on this topic if some unexpected question comes rather than giving a wrong answer as that will take away the very credibility of the teacher.

Expectation from the students should be realistic. We must not compare them. Gilbert Highet has quoted "So, if you are interested in teaching, do not even expect the young to be like yourself or the people you know". Let you allow the students to choose their own role models. It will be nice if faculty can provide the role models to the students.

Conclusions

We must love our students and consider them someone special. If we will have love towards them we will consider them as our own. We always work hard for own people and the people whom we love. We must not try to imitate the style of someone because everybody is unique and the God has made them so. We can imbibe the good virtues and qualities of others and assimilate them and deliver them in our own unique style. We should try to know the background of the students and have rapport with them. Rapport makes it easy for the students to learn.

I hope reading this article will set faculty thinking about job of teaching and how can teaching be made better. Teacher should reexamine their classroom practice to fulfill the gap between expectation and performance in the classroom. This will give the teachers a lot of satisfaction that students are learning in an improved manner. I anticipate this will alter the teaching philosophy in Forensic Medicine and Toxicology.

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References

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