



Communication Skills Teaching and Assessment for Undergraduate Dental Students

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Communication skills in Dental education

Communication skill training (CST) It is knowledge, skills and attitude of dental student to communicate effectively and empathetically with patients, relatives, professional colleagues and peers [1]. A survey of CST among UK medical schools showed that they implement 3 aims and objectives of CST curriculum as promotion of knowledge and understanding of communication skills centered to medical practice, the ability to utilize appropriate communication skills in specific medical context and the development of attitudes conducive to good communication practice.

Most of UK Medical schools dedicated a staff member (usually a psychologist) who was responsible for co-ordination of CST throughout the curriculum. Most of schools confirmed that CST begins in the initial stages in 1st and 2nd years. They stressed on practical sessions rather than lecturing approach. The course contents were varied from non-verbal to verbal. Teaching methods were role playing, group discussion, simulated patients and videos. All medical schools where CST was assessed through OSCE [2].

The Liaison committee on Medical education in North America stated that there must be instruction and evaluation of [communication] skills as they relate to physician responsibilities, including communication with patients, families, colleagues and other health professionals [2].

Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) conducted a survey in 1999 about communication skills education in North American Medical schools. Eighty Five percent reported they use a

combination of discussion, observation and practice in such skills. The primary teaching methods were small group discussions and seminars (90%), lectures and presentations (82%). Student interviews with simulated patient (72%) and nearly half of schools (45%) reported using rounds to teach communication skills. All these methods do not have a model of a structure that is consistent and effective [3,4].

Manekar, *et al*, [5] proposed communication skill training (CST) for dental interns. They made pre-test questionnaire and post-test after 16hrs of interactive sessions including; verbal, non-verbal communication, written communication (Prescription instructions), patient referral and other skills. They found significant improvement in communication skills after sessions. A randomized controlled trial by Sunila (2013) implemented a communication skills course in 3rd year undergraduate dental students with pre and post questionnaire of 27 items of two patient interview. He found that implementing a communication course improve the student' dentist-patient interaction. There is a still needs to a formal communication skills program that should be incorporated in the dental curriculum. This program should be divided into three stages; pre-clinical, clinical and postgraduate stages. This needs a cooperation between medical and dental schools to implement a legalization concerning communication skills training program in undergraduate as well as postgraduate education for health care professions. This is an essential competence for tomorrow's doctors [6].

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