

## Evaluation of usefulness of seminar as a learning tool at medical undergraduate level

Diwanshu Sharma\*, Rohini Gupta

Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Acharya Shri Chander College of Medical Sciences and Hospital, Sidhra, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India

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**\*Correspondence to:**

Dr. Diwanshu Sharma,  
Email: diwanshusharma2007@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Teaching methods has a major role to play in making a subject innovative, interesting and participatory for the students. In India still teaching is controlled by teacher centered classroom method. Apart from this one of the method adopted is organizing seminars for the students. Knowledge acquisition through seminars forms an essential part of medical training programme. The idea behind the seminar system is to familiarize students more extensively with the methodology of their chosen subject.

**Methods:** A questionnaire was prepared containing ten questions and 1000 MBBS students of second, pre-final, final professional and 200 faculty members, were asked to fill up the questionnaire. It included ten questions.

**Results:** Results showed that seminar methods of teaching-learning, is effective way of learning, which is relevant to self-development and is also interactive. It improves communication skills.

**Conclusions:** Many of the students feel that this technique of seminar programme is helpful for them in the long run. Thus teaching by way of seminar could be an effective learning method as it involves the three major domains of teaching i.e., cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills and is thus well - accepted among the medical students.

**Keywords:** Seminar, Under graduate students, Questionnaire

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching methods has a major role to play in making a subject innovative, interesting and participatory for the students. In India still teaching is controlled by teacher centered classroom method.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this one of the method adopted is organizing seminars for the students. Knowledge acquisition through seminars forms an essential part of medical training programme. The idea behind the seminar system is to familiarize students more extensively with the methodology of their chosen subject. Team works motivate the students to work in coordination and learn from each other. Meaningful learning involves active, constructive, intentional,

authentic and cooperative learning Jonnasen et al. Seminar is one of the method that can promote meaningful learning which involves learning and teaching each other. Compared to the traditional teacher centered classroom method of teaching where responsibility is on one side, seminar involves bidirectional participation where there is discussion of the topic from speaker side as well as the audience. Reports have shown that teacher centred classroom make students bored and exhausted resulting in their absence from classroom.<sup>1</sup> Old teaching method encourages passivity with more of teacher talk and lack of interaction with the students.<sup>2,3</sup> Seminar can increase the interest of students in the subject by their voluntary participation which can

provide better learning experience for the students. It involves sharing of ideas and knowledge and emphasises on interdependent learning unlike independent learning.

In this world of competition, situation demands a person to be confident about the subject and well versed with it. Seminar is one such method that can motivate medical students to face the upcoming competitive stress by making them more confident, improving their speaking skills and knowledge about a subject. Besides this, students develop other skills like searching a topic on internet, preparing power point presentation. This study was done with the motive to evaluate the usefulness of seminar as a learning tool for the medical students.

## METHODS

A questionnaire was prepared containing ten questions and 1000 MBBS students of second, pre-final, final professional and 200 faculty members, were asked to fill up the questionnaire. It included ten questions. The questionnaire includes the following questions as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: The questionnaire.**

Questions	Medical UG (%) yes	Medical UGs (%) no
Was it informative?	100	0
Did it help you in your subject?	100	0
Was it interactive?	99	1
Did you find it easy?	40	60
Did it interfere with your routine studies?	50	50
Do you think such activities should be carried on?	95	5
Did it improve teacher-student relationship?	98	2
Did the feedback of teachers help you in anyway?	99	1
Do you think topics were appropriate?	100	0
Did seminars improve any of your skill?	96	4

## RESULTS

It was observed that 100% medical undergraduates found seminar an effective tool for understanding a topic. Ninety percent of medical students said that it was much easier to memorise a topic through seminar than otherwise. Ten percent found that it's difficult to prepare a seminar though they agreed that as far as learning is concerned it is a better method unlike traditional learning method. It

was observed that seminar was considered better for self-learning. Students found seminars informative as lot of net surfing was required to prepare a seminar that increased their knowledge about the topic. Another advantage of seminar is that, it improved teacher-student relationship. Assessment that was made by the teachers created more interest, commitment among the students and increased intellectual challenge. Students got well versed with the subject by the feedback they got from the teachers. It was observed that even teachers believed that seminars are effective teaching learning tool for undergraduate as well as post graduate teaching is concerned.

Students even observed improvement in their personality and skills like they became more confident, no more stage fear, were more confident to face the audience, free with their teachers as far as the subject was concerned, more understanding between batch mates, improvement in their speaking skill, learned the importance of teamwork, better use of laptops and net surfing. Students even believed that now their perform in the theory as well as practical exam would be much better. Many students observed that though seminar is helpful but if other side of the coin is seen it interfere with the routine studies. Even after this 100% students believed that such activities should be carried on routinely. Few students even suggested that feedback forms should be filled by teachers to encourage them as it takes lot of effort to prepare a seminar and one need creditability to be better next time. Apart from this a well-equipped library should be there, with things like data projectors, charts and net access to do their work without any waste of time and in a smart way.

Results showed that seminar teaching-learning tool, is effective way of learning, which is relevant to self-development and is also interactive.<sup>4</sup> It improves communication and speaking skills. It provokes discussion which encourages students to give their opinion and clear their doubts.

## DISCUSSION

A questionnaire based survey was done to assess seminar as effective learning tool for medical undergraduates and post graduates. It was observed that in every aspect seminar proved beneficial to the medical students to understand a particular topic. Students even stated that now they could perform better in the exams and fear of viva is much less now. The present study is consistent with the previous studies that seminars is an effective educational tool in the medical field.<sup>5,6</sup>

Various benefits while teaching by means of seminar include increase in the confidence of students, makeover of their personality, improvement in their speaking skill and their learning of how to work in a team. One major drawback of teaching via seminar was interference in routine studies of the students as preparing a single topic

takes plenty of time. In spite of this, students appreciated the idea of conducting such seminars for them.

## CONCLUSION

Many of the students feel that this technique of seminar programme is helpful for them in the long run. Thus teaching by way of seminar could be an effective learning method as it involves the three major domains of teaching i.e., cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills and is thus well -accepted among the medical students.

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