

Assessment of problems based learning sessions in the integrated medical curriculum of the Colombo Medical Faculty

Problem Based Learning sessions (PBLs) are used as a novel teaching method in the new curriculum in the Colombo Medical Faculty.

To determine whether PBLs encourage active learning and to find adequacy of students and teachers knowledge about the PBL process and to identify areas for improvement.

Feedback was obtained from the first batch of students(94/95 intake) who are in the third year using a questionnaire. Feedback from the facilitators was obtained using a different questionnaire.

All students, present for the PBL on the day of the study, completed the questionnaire. Total of 118 Students have spent 72 hours as 18 PBLs. 77% of the students and 88% of the facilitators said PBLs encourage active learning. 30% of students and 40% of facilitators thought that PBLs are conducted satisfactorily 70% students and 57% facilitators are clear about the PBL process.

80% students do self reading for PBLs and 95% requested relevant reading material. Most facilitators have had training on PBLs and some have conducted PBLs outside their area of expertise. Providing reading materials and discussion among facilitators before the PBL is helpful for better conduct of PBLs.

The results suggest that PBLs encourage active learning. PBLs process could be improved by giving guidelines for the students and facilitators, informing or providing reading material, prior discussion and further teacher training.