Evaluation of a model of feedback on clinical dental sessions.

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Introduction & Background

Dental graduates must graduate with a high level of clinical skills. Feedback in clinical assessment is critical to the development of these clinical skills otherwise education in this environment can be reduced to mere supervision and the competence suffers. Culturally, the giving and receiving of feedback can be difficult for staff and students alike and the clinical learning environment is universally deemed challenging. The development of self-assessment abilities is desirable to encourage professionalism, life-long learning and competency in the dental graduate. Feedback models have advantages and disadvantages but the main advantage in using a structured approach is that both student and teacher know what is expected from them in the feedback exchange.

Aim

To enhance and develop the feedback and assessment processes on clinical sessions in an effort to contribute to the development of self-assessment skills with the desired outcome of improving clinical competence in dental graduates.

Methods

- Training of Clinical Supervisors-
  i. Introductory lecture on FB/MOF introduced
  ii. Calibration of Supervisors
  - Training Dental students in MOF and consent process
  - Evaluation
    i. Quantitative survey
    ii. Qualitative focus groups
  - Comparison/Benchmarking of FB and assessment on clinical environments in other dental schools- Malmö and Sheffield Universities

References


Model of Feedback

The model was adapted from work done by Nicol and MacFarlane-Dick2 in 2006.

Figure 1: Model of Feedback

1. Learning outcomes highlighted at beginning of the session verbally – student must know what they are setting out to achieve at the start of the clinical session.
2. Example of good work- refer to a text book or online material in advance of clinical session- to know what they are striving to achieve or to model good practice.
3. FB to the students incorporating a reflective component, “How do you feel that went? What would you do differently next time?”
4. Clinical Supervisors determines if any issues arose for the student over the session (feed forward)
5. Clinical Supervisors enters into a dialogue with student, highlighting what went well and any issues which occurred over the clinical session, students are advised that they should/could write them down to guide their learning before the next session. (feed forward)
6. Students are asked how they are getting on since last week, any areas of concern from the previous week (feed up)

Discussion

Feedback is important to dental undergraduate students.

Students

- Want to receive regular feedback on their work, preferably during and after each clinical session
- Wish to have a balance of positive and negative feedback in both oral and written forms
- Felt feedback was necessary so that good performance can be replicated, repeated and improved on
- Felt it should include a balanced content of the technical aspects of the session
- Recorded an improvement in the quality of feedback on the clinical sessions during the study
- Some recorded that there had been a failure to implement the model but there was an appreciation of the intervention recorded in several of the focus groups

Organisational Impact

- Feedback in line with best evidence
- Enhanced student learning experience
- Collaborative teamwork promoted and improved communication encouraged
- Continued professional development and support of staff in the process
- Stakeholder engagement

Results

Questionnaires were completed by 58% of classes (n=46) with 100% of students surveyed strongly agreeing or agreeing somewhat with the statement that it was important for them to receive regular feedback on their work.

Figure 2: Does the feedback you receive enhance your performance?

2.38% 4.75%
78.20%

Yes No I’m not sure

Some of the major themes in the analysis of the qualitative data included external, technical and internal validation sought by student, performance related feedback, peer feedback issues, time related issues in relation to feedback practices and the perception that asking for feedback can negatively reflect on the grade.

Conclusion

The dental clinical learning environment is stimulating and dynamic and it has the potential to be a very powerful environment for learning but it is not without its challenges.

- Feedback is needed as grades don’t always capture the subtle nuances of performance.
- Feedback is at the heart of all learning and is a complex and challenging area but by adopting some approaches of effective and evidence-based feedback practice students can be supported in regulating their own learning.

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