

TUTORING OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

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SUMMARY

An unconventional method of teaching and revising obst. & gynecology for undergraduate students is being presented. The format of tutorials has been described and the feedbacks from students as regards this method, analysed. This method was found to be informative, the format satisfactory, the presentation therein very good, the duration of teaching adequate and the method simple enough by a large percentage of students. 88.15% students felt that their knowledge increased and 87.23% felt that the session was very useful. These results have been discussed in the light of the objectives of this session, its format and current literature.

INTRODUCTION

Conventional teaching methods in obstetrics & gynecology and to that matter all aspects of Medicine have been known to - have their limitations (Christine & Kenneth, 1982). Small group teaching concept in their varied formats have opened up exciting possibilities of overcoming these limitations like boredom, lack of student participation, monotony, lack of problem solving skills and the like.

Tutorial is one such teaching methodology. Abercombie (1974) indicated that perhaps the nicest things about tutorial is that in our present state of ignorance, students and teachers have to learn together because the best way to learn in tutorial is to get on and do it. In this paper our experience with tutorials in teaching obstetrics & gynecology is being presented. It is an unconventional teaching method and the format followed in these exercises is also made further unconventional by making changes in the conventional format of these tutorials to

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tailor it to the need of the subject.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a study of our experience with tutorials in O&G for undergraduate teaching for last eight years from Jan. 1986 to Dec. 1993. It is a study carried out in the third unit of the Dept. of Obst. & Gynec., Medical College and SSG Hospital, Baroda.

The format of the tutorials is as under -

Planning

Tutorials are planned atleast 7 days in advance. The U.G. students are involved in the selection of the subject for the tutorial. The subject selected is usually one which has already been taught once by traditional method but essentially by a P.G. student/resident and not by a consultant. Equal weightage is given to obst. as well as gyn. with one subject alternating with the other. The list of topics usually selected are as shown in Table I.

Tutorials are essentially kept during extra-time in the afternoons and not during their routine clinical posting hours of the morning. The students are well briefed regarding the format of tutorials in advance.

Subgrouping

In our institution around 15 U.G. students are posted in each unit in O&G. At the appointed time the subgrouping is randomly done by the students calling out members and same numbers being grouped together. Usually 4 subgroups of a quartet of student are formed.

Tutoring Session

Only one subgroup is tutored at a time. Thus a maximum of 4 students are tutored at the time. The tutor is a consultant (in this case the author himself). On subgroup is invited at a time. The tutor already has a set of questions prepared. One student of the quartet is asked a question. This is known as a 'direct' question. If he answers, the next

Table I

Topics covered at Tutorials

Obstetrics	Gynecology
1. Spontaneous Abortions	1. Normal ovulation
2. Vesicular Mole	2. Normal Menstruation
3. A.P.H.	3. D.U.B.
4. P.P.H.	4. Fibroid
5. Normal Puerperium	5. Prolapse
6. Abnormal Puerperium	6. Ca cervix
7. M.T.P.	7. Contraception
8. P.I.H.	8. P.I.D.

direct question goes to the next student. Once all have answered then the rotation is started again.

However, if any of the student fails to answer his direct question, it is "bounced" to the student sitting next to him. This bouncing continues till either one of the students manages to answer or if all four fail, the teacher provides the answer. However, the next direct question follows the original rotation and not where this bounced question stopped so that each student gets an equal opportunity to face the direct question.

Once the entire set of questions is over, the next subgroup which was upto now waiting outside is called. However, the batch which has just completed is directed to sit back but now not participating actively. They will hear the same questions now asked again and answers given by the next subgroup. This generates a silent competition within the students noting where they failed and the next subgroup was able to answer.

PRIZE QUESTIONS

Two or three prize questions are identified by the tutor. These are relatively tough but relevant and tossed to each subgroup. Whichever subgroup is able to answer is openly appreciated. Those who fail to do so are **not** admonished. Nowhere during the entire session negative and deterrant tactics like admonition, ridicule or insult employed as it is consciously remembered that active discussion by students immediately suffers by these negative tendencies.

OPEN HOUSE

Once all subgroups have completed the tutoring session, the open house session starts. This is a sort of "you ask, I answer" type of session. It is during this session that students ask the tutor whatever doubts that have remained in their mind. Each student is individually identified and positively encouraged to ask. All throughout the tutoring as well as open house session, the postgraduate student who had originally taught the topic sits in the proceeding. He makes a continuous note of any shortcomings that he may have left behind or any wrong concept that he may have taught. During the open house when the students are getting their doubts cleared he becomes most conscious as these were the areas which he either never covered or covered in such a way that it raised doubts in the mind of his undergraduate students. There is no time limit for the open house, but for tutoring session each subgroup is questioned for not more than 25 minutes.

FEEDBACKS

At the end of the tutorial the students are given a carefully drawn feedback proforma. These proformas are drawn in the joint guidance of The Dean, Faculty of Education and Psychology, M.S. University of Baroda and The Director, National Teachers Training Course, PGI, Chandigarh. The identity of the students need not be revealed in these feedbacks. However students are tacitly encouraged to exhibit their identity, if possible, so that if some doubts regarding the suggestions (if any) made by him come up then the student is called to discuss out his

suggestion. This intention is cleared in advance and the students are more than ready to come down whenever called for discussing their suggestions for further improvement of the session.

RESULTS

Tutorials are regularly conducted in our unit for nearly 8 years now. 324 feedbacks duly completed on different aspects of these exercises have been analysed and the results of these are presented.

As shown in this table more than 90% students felt that these sessions were informative and the format satisfactory.

Table II

Overall Students' opinion on tutorials (n=329)

	No.	%
Informative	318	96.67
Un-informative	08	2.43
Can't Say	03	0.91
Format :		
Satisfactory	309	93.92
Unsatisfactory	18	5.47
Can't say	02	0.61
Presentation :		
Dramatic	50	15.19
Very Good	209	63.53
Good	38	11.55
Ordinary	21	6.38
Boring	03	0.91
Can't Say	08	2.43

As regards the presentation, 75.08% found it to be very good or good. A sizable 15.19% found some dramatic element in the presentation.

Coming to the brasstacks and their opinion as regards the tutorials, 87.23% felt the duration of these sessions to be adequate and a near equal of the remaining felt them either to be too long or too short (around 5%). As regards the duration of open house 87.23% felt it to be adequate. They were not necessarily the same responders as those who also felt that the duration of the main session was adequate. 7.9% however felt that these were too long and a meagre 0.93%

Table III

Opinion on duration & simplicity of Method

	No.	%
Duration of Tutoring Session		
Too Long	19	5.78
Too Short	17	5.17
Adequate	287	87.23
Can't Say	06	1.82
Duration of Open House		
Too Long	26	7.90
Too Short	03	0.91
Adequate	287	87.23
Can't say	13	3.95
Method		
Simple	308	93.62
Complicated	10	3.08
Can't say	11	3.34

felt the duration to be too short. 93.62% responders felt that the methodology of teaching at these sessions was simple and easily understandable.

88.15% responders felt that after session their knowledge increased. 5.78% felt that it remained the same. Also, 87.23% found these sessions to be very useful and 6.38% found them to be useful.

Suggestions given by the students in the space provided for the same during the proforma were sensitively studied and responded to and met with to the maximum limit possible.

No grades, marks or scores were given to the students. This was in response to the suggestion of the students themselves which they felt would lead to unhealthy competition. However, open appreciation for good performances of the entire quartet or even individuals was done. Also, presence of each subgroup after

completing their tutorial as silent observers generated a silent competition, as specified in the previous section.

DISCUSSION

Very positive and utility oriented results emerge from this study. One important purpose of this unconventional method was small group teaching and revision. In our unit, new teachers (P.G. students and residents) are trained through microteaching sessions. (Desai and Hazra 1992). However to further reinforce what they teach and to iron out the short comings if any in the matter that they have taught at the risk of repetition, these sessions are conducted as revision sessions. The continuous presence of the postgraduate who taught this topic as an observer helps him note his good and not so good points if any during the primary teaching session. Apprehensions are expressed about this sort of overlap and therefore waste of valuable teaching time. (Neufeld & Bauons 1974). However these have not been found in the present study as borne by the consistently good and positive opinions expressed by the students in the feedbacks. The concept of "loss of valuable teaching time" is also taken care of by conducting these sessions outside the hours of scheduled clinical position, during the afternoons.

Student participation during discussion is a problem faced by many teachers (Broady - 1970, Blackie - 1971). However, this problem is overcome in the present study by tossing direct and bounced questions to the student and patiently waiting for the answer. Infact the

Table IV
Opinion on after-math

	No.	%
Your Knowledge		
Increased	290	88.15
Decreased	00	00.00
Remained same	19	5.78
Can't Say	20	6.08
Session		
Very useful	287	87.23
Useful	21	6.38
Not useful	05	1.52
Can't say	16	4.86

students get so tuned to the discussion that they "bounce" on their turn when they get it in rotation as described in the preceding section.

The role of the tutor is thus very crucial. Being a good tutor is hard work and conducting a discussion is more difficult for some teachers than giving a lecture (Lee 1982). He has to be appreciative, encouraging, positive and continuously interactive. He has to vibe well with the group and strike an instant rapport. The essential difference between an examination and a tutorial is, though in the latter there is a question - answer exercise like in the former, answers are also given to the questions asked by the tutor, if the students fails to answer. Thus tutorial becomes a teaching exercise in contrast to an examination. A small element of challenging by the tutor to the group in right proportion makes the students respond more sensitively (Stenhouse 1972). This is also taken care of in the present method.

Tutorials just do not happen. They require to be planned and executed scientifically (Bligh & Cleugh 1971, Stenhouse 1972). If done so, this unconventional method can go very well with the students and at the same time

achieve all its objectives of teaching and revision, successfully.

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