BRIEF COMMUNICATION

From Dissection Hall to Clinics: The Impact of Sharing and Caring in Healthcare

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Introduction

Providing optimal patient care requires teamwork involving doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and other healthcare providers. The importance of interdisciplinary teams is increasingly being recognised in the management of patients (1). Thus, sharing and caring are two important traits which should be inculcated from the early period of entering the medical profession.

Sharing is to have or use something at the same time as someone else, divide something to give part of it to someone else, if two or more people share an activity, they each do some of it, or when people share a feeling, quality, or experience, they either have it in common or express it to each other.

Caring is being kind and supporting others emotionally (2).

Beginning the journey as a medical undergraduate is a challenging experience. The students can be overwhelmed with lectures, recommended piles of textbooks, expected study hours, and assignments. Discussing and sharing experiences among peers and senior students regarding the scope and approach may be a helpful approach in tackling this experience. While knowledge sharing plays an important role in the development of a successful student into a successful future doctor, it has become a challenge to academic institutions (3).

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It is evidence-based that sharing and caring improves group-level performance (4).The initial years at the medical faculty provides ample opportunities for group or shared learning at the dissection hall, histology laboratory, biochemistry laboratory and the physiology practical sessions. Small group discussions and tutorial sessions provide such occasions to share knowledge, experience, thoughts and ideas not only with peers but also with academics.

At the dissection hall

Cadaveric dissections can be considered an ideal setting for developing the qualities of sharing and caring. For optimal learning, the students can divide the work among themselves for dissecting, identifying the structures using an anatomy atlas, and referring textbooks for anatomical and clinical importance. This will enhance the learning experience, help the students cover a significant subject content within a limited time and also enhance their decision-making ability, problem-solving skills and group interactions (3). This provides the opportunity to clarify their doubts and learn important subject content which may be missed while studying alone. Peers with strong teaching and explanation skills can help other students improve their understanding.

Due to the limited availability and invaluable role in medical education, a cadaver is usually shared by a group of students. Other available resources required in the dissection hall are also limited such as the dissecting instruments, bones, and atlases. For effective learning, the students should learn to share these key resources.

Some students may find the experience of dissecting a human cadaver distressing and experience varying levels of acute stress (5,6). The caring support from a friend may help in reducing their distress. Looking out for one another and checking in on peers facing challenges can foster a supportive environment and a safe space, helping to ease the distress caused by a heavy workload. Excessive competition among peers may lead to burnout, stress, and even depression, ultimately hindering personal growth and teamwork (7). Developing a mindset of caring for others can help alleviate such challenges.

The role of the academics

Curricula and group work including discussions and practical sessions are arranged by the academics. It is their responsibility to design them to help and encourage the students to have better knowledge sharing sessions. They have a key role in emphasizing the importance of collaborative learning and in reducing unnecessary competition between students (8).

The use of teaching-learning strategies such as problem-based learning and group-based assignments will encourage students to exchange ideas and support each other. Promotion of guided peer teaching, where students are allowed to explore a subject area and present to others will also be valuable in promoting collaboration.

Mentoring programmes are established in medical schools worldwide with the aim of developing professionalism and personal growth, increasing interest in clinical specialties and academic medicine, and providing career counselling (9). Well organised mentoring programmes will ensure that the students feel comfortable in seeking support from faculty. Encounters at a closer level will provide opportunity for the staff to inculcate attitudes of sharing and caring among the students.

Integrating dedicated sessions on empathy to the medical curriculum would be highly valuable. These sessions could be conducted as lectures, case studies, role plays, and interactive workshops.

Academics should take care to serve as role models, as students are more likely to "follow by example" when they observe their mentors demonstrating empathy, professionalism, and collaboration.

Feedback and reflection are considered important tools in improvement of communication, while enhancing the quality of a process and its outcome (10). Regular feedback and reflective practices incorporated into the teaching programme will help the students recognise areas for improvement while enhancing their ability to share knowledge, collaborate effectively with peers, and provide compassionate patient care.

At the clinics

Sharing information with patients empowers them to make informed decisions about their healthcare, fostering trust and active involvement in their treatment. This is especially important when involving major health interventions (11). Empathy, compassion, and active listening are fundamental to patient-centered care, as they build stronger doctor-patient relationships, and improve patient compliance and recovery outcomes. When patients feel heard and valued, they are more likely to engage with their treatment plans and experience better health outcomes (12).

During medical training, collaboration with peers lays the foundation for effective teamwork in multidisciplinary care settings. Sharing knowledge and information with colleagues enhances collective understanding, benefiting both doctors and patients. Multidisciplinary care teams limit adverse events, improves outcomes and promotes patient and employee satisfaction (13).

Clinicians play a vital role in shaping the collaborative attitudes of medical students. Appropriate and meaningful involvement in hospital activities, along with interactions with other healthcare professionals such as nurses, physiotherapists, technicians, and supportive staff, is crucial for developing well rounded competent future medical officers. Additionally, clinicians should foster a positive learning environment by providing constructive feedback and avoiding any form of public criticism, ensuring that students feel respected and motivated to learn.

A healthy and supportive working environment is also crucial for maintaining the mental well-being of doctors, enabling them to deliver compassionate and effective care (14).

Empathy and collaboration not only improve diagnosis and treatment but also foster professional growth by strengthening relationships with both patients and colleagues. These values create a ripple effect, shaping a positive and thriving healthcare environment that ultimately benefits everyone involved.

Conclusion

This journey from the dissection hall to the patient care is not just about acquiring medical knowledge and clinical skills; it is also about mastering empathy, healthy human connection and collaboration. Sharing and caring are fundamental principles that create a supportive learning environment and a competent healthcare professional. In the dissection hall, students learn the importance of respecting human life, culture of mutual support, working as a team and ethical responsibility which will ultimately lay the foundation of those principles in patient care as well. By emphasizing the importance and impact of sharing and caring throughout medical education, we can nurture the budding healthcare professionals to grow into truly exceptional doctors.

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