14

TOPICS

IN HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION
A GUIDE TO PRACTICAL WISDOM

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FEEDBACK IN HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION

SIVAPALAN SANCHAYAN, THILLAINATHAN SATHAANANTHAN & ASELA OLUPELIYAWA

"We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve."

Bill Gates

Introduction

Feedback to students on their learning occurs constantly during undergraduate and postgraduate medical training whether in a planned or unplanned manner. Feedback is given in classroom settings (lectures and tutorials) and clinical training settings (wards, outpatient departments, teaching rooms) throughout a student's career. From the student's perspective, there could be multiple sources of feedback such as teachers, peers, other healthcare professionals, patients, textbooks, online activities, and so on.

The role of the teacher in providing feedback is considered as paramount throughout students' training. Several accreditation councils have enacted policies that require feedback provision (1-3) as part of the undergraduate curriculum, emphasizing the importance of feedback in medical education. This chapter aims to provide health professions teachers with an understanding of feedback concepts and some strategies and models that can be used while recognizing the contextual influences on feedback in Sri Lanka.

The concept of feedback

Various definitions of feedback exist. In a review of medical education literature by van der Ridder et al. (4) feedback is defined as

"Specific information about the comparison between a trainee's observed performance and a standard, given with the intent to improve the trainee's performance" (4).

Feedback information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) can also be conceptualized as 'information regarding aspects of one's performance to make adjustments in reaching a goal' (5, 6). Three key concepts are highlighted in these definitions: that the information is related to current performance, that the information should be viewed in relation to a standard or a goal, and that the information should contain suggestions to make improvements.