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Make the most of Learning Moments and Hot Reviews

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Within both primary and secondary care settings there are a variety of educational activities and opportunities, both formal and informal, occurring on a regular basis. These can be capitalised on by the trainer or educational supervisor to maximise the level of educational engagement for the trainee. Opportunistic 'learning moments' that occur throughout the working day can be exploited by the trainer to highlight significant learning points or events in ways that will serve to enhance the trainees knowledge and skill levels. Hot reviews can be planned activities that will allow the trainer to explore issues of patient management and care and to assess the levels of understanding and engagement of the learner.

What exactly are hot reviews and learning moments?

What exactly is involved in these activities and how can they be incorporated into the daily educational activities that are experienced in the general practice or the hospital setting?

Learning Moments

This is really about making the most of every day work. The underlying principle of the learning moment is the knowledge that within daily practice there are many opportunities to teach & learn. These are frequently short opportunities and each need last only a 'moment'. However they are often overlooked by both the teacher and the learner and so not taken up and expanded upon. One example that can be offered is the discussion that may occur over the possible choices for managing a patient and the pros and cons of each. This should be seen as an integral part of consultant ward rounds, or teaching sessions in general practice, but unfortunately is by no means the norm, many rounds are simply the means for issuing orders with no explanation of why that particular action has been chosen and sometimes in general practice a consultation can focus on the patient to the exclusion of the student or trainee who is present. Whilst this understandable in a busy clinic or ward it may become a habit which means that the trainee never has the opportunity to learn from their seniors about the problems they deal with in routine practice.

Educational Prescriptions

An extension of this is the ides of the 'educational prescription' as promoted by David Sackett & his colleagues (see further reading). When a topic is raised during a ward round, out patients clinic or an observed general practice consultation, for which the trainee does not have an answer or when the teacher cannot provide the evidence to support an assertion, then a script is written requiring the person, usually but not invariably the trainee, to seek evidence from experts or from the literature and present the results briefly at the next meeting of those concerned. The recording of the prescription acts as a reminder to all concerned and it is essential that at the chosen time the trainee is afforded the opportunity to provide the results of this search

Hot Review

In educational terms a hot review can be defined as teaching in response to case presentations. Whilst this is an essential feature of clinical teaching in medicine this form of case-based teaching is often poorly done (Irby 1994). In a postgraduate setting where the trainee (SHO, SpR, GP Registrar) is undertaking a clinical placement, actually building into the sessions a structured teaching activity that makes use of the hot review, is an effective way of stimulating thinking and enhancing the learning experience. Following a clinical service session that the trainee has undertaken, either consultations, or practical procedures, the trainer puts aside some time to spend with the trainee to discuss the cases seen during the session. It is 'hot' because the trainee comes to it straight from the clinic or consulting room and takes the form of a 'review' because the trainer will review (usually with case-notes) what the trainee has done.

Although the technique is now widely used by GP trainers, and sometimes used in hospital settings it needs to be acknowledged for its educational worth and formalised into a planned and regular educational activity that forms an integral part of the teaching portfolio for the trainer. The guidelines outlined below allow for a transparency of process and will hopefully allow the trainer to appreciate the often undervalued technique as a tool to enhance learning.

Different Types of hot review

It is helpful for the sessional time to be planned and protected, although a hot review could take place any time – such as with an SHO during a take day or with a GP Registrar after a busy clinic. There are several different types of hot review and the trainer can draw on each at different types and different stages in the training programme to ensure that the learning events are maximised and the level of trainee engagement and understanding are fully explored and assessed by the trainer.

Systematic Hot Review:

In this type of review the trainer will go through all, or most of the case seen by the trainee. This strategy is useful for assessing the competencies of a new trainee and it can ensure that the trainee is performing according to a satisfactory standard or to agreed clinical protocols. The systematic hot review allows the trainer to ensure that the patients that have been seen by the trainee have been adequately managed.

Random Case Analysis:

Here the trainer selects, at random, a case from the pile of notes for detailed discussion. This approach provides the trainer with an opportunity to gain an in depth assessment of the levels of knowledge and the attitudes of the trainee. It allows for a deeper discussion between the trainer and trainee in which any aspect of the case may be developed, dependent on learner's needs.

Further Information

Irby D.M. (1994) *Three Exemplary Models of Case-Based Teaching*, Academic Medicine. 69, 12, 947-953.

Nasmith L., McAlpine L., Franco E.D. (1995) *Teaching by case discussion: a faculty development intervention*, Medical Teacher 17,4 419-429.

Sackett D.L., Haynes R.B., Guyatt G.H. & Tugwell P. (1991) *Keeping up to date – The Educational Prescription in Clinical Epidemiology*, 2nd Ed, Boston Little Brown & Co.

Kassirer, J. (2010). *Teaching Clinical Reasoning: Case bases and Coached*. Academic Medicine. 85.7 pp. 1118-1124.

Popil, I. (2011). *Promotion of critical thinking by using case studies as a teaching method*. Nurse Education Today. 31:2 pp. 204-207

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Problem Case Analysis:

This technique enables the trainee to present for review a case that they have defined as being in some way problematic. This is a very useful learning opportunity for the trainee who can set their own agenda and focus on a subject area or aspect of management that they have concerns about, or have identified as an area of weakness in their knowledge base. However there is a risk that the trainee only brings what he/she wants to discuss and so may be avoiding real areas of professional difficulty or areas of weakness

Teaching Styles in Hot Reviews

The role of the trainer in the hot review is very clear; it is to facilitate learning by active listening techniques and by careful and strategic probing. The trainer seeks to illicit information from the trainee by;

- ▶ **Listening** to and clarifying facts about the case.
'Tell me about this case . . . How did the patient present . . . ?'
- ▶ **Organising** +. 'What was going through your mind when you heard that . . . ?'
- ▶ **Probing** in order to tease out the thinking processes that the trainee was engaging with during the consultation.
'Did you ask about . . . ?'
- ▶ **Expanding** the discussion so that it engages the trainee and allows them to demonstrate areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes: 'Tell me about your working diagnoses at that point?' or 'What evidence do you have to justify your decision to use this test/treatment/ advice?' and 'How would you find such evidence?' 'Why not go to the library later to find out about this? (then we can talk about it further.)'. 'How did you feel when the patient told you that they hadn't followed your earlier advice . . . ?' 'What did you find difficult here?' 'Why was that?'
- ▶ **Providing feedback** on the performance. 'You did (that) well'. 'What would you do differently next time?'

. . . and Finally

The hot review follows a number of important educational principles. The instruction is anchored in cases which are the day-to-day work of the learner. It actively involves the learners and provides them with an opportunity to receive direction and feedback from the trainer. Whilst successfully conducting an effective educational hot review takes practice, the teaching skills that are required to undertake the hot review can be learned and developed. If you are engaged in any regular teaching activity, have you thought to try video-taping a one-to-one teaching session (with you trainee's consent) and then using this video as the basis for a discussion on your teaching technique with a colleague?

Interested in learning more about this and other educational topics? Why not professionalise your role with an academic qualification at PGCert, Dip or MSc in Medical Education via e-learning or attendance courses.

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