



## Use TV Dramas in Medical Education

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### Overview

Each week, thousands of medical learners alone and in groups, watch programmes such as Scrubs, House and Grey's Anatomy. To medical educators and learners, these programmes offer a host of powerful tutorial cases of unprecedented quality. It is unsurprising therefore that educators have recognised the pedagogical value in this virtual learning approach, and whether through incorporating video clips into their tutorials to support the concepts they are trying to convey, or simply referring to them during discussions about a similar case, are harnessing the enthusiasm that students have for these programmes.

Medical dramas are a very popular media genre, and with the increased clinical accuracy heralded by shows such as ER; they are incredibly popular socially amongst medical learners.

There is therefore felt amongst educators to be an opportunity to utilise this enthusiasm through pedagogical methods to facilitate students' learning about communication, ethics and identity.

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### The Potential Uses of TV Dramas

#### Medical Problems

- ▶ Signs and Symptoms
- ▶ Impact of condition on individual
- ▶ Impact of condition of relatives

#### Medical system Issues

- ▶ Medical Treatment
- ▶ Alternative treatments
- ▶ Community Treatment modalities
- ▶ Doctor-Patient relationships

#### Psychosocial Issues

- ▶ Relationships between family members
- ▶ Job related concerns
- ▶ Legal issues

#### Family Issues

- ▶ Relationships with children and parents
- ▶ Family violence
- ▶ Caring for elderly relatives
- ▶ Exploring of stereotypes

### Advantages and Disadvantages

We can learn a lot from medical dramas; they present complex issues in a far more engaging format than illustrated clinical data. These shows depict scenes of dying and death, birth, critical and chronic illness throughout the generation spectrum, as well as ethical themes of consent, equality and confidentiality. The dramatization of these concepts means that students find them an enjoyable adjunct to their formal education. The depth and breadth of emotions demonstrated in dramas encourages student engagement and the opportunity to critique, more so than case studies.

There are some serious limitations associated with the use of medical dramas, particularly the 'Hollywood effect' which means that educators should exercise care when utilising them. Most TV dramas are an hour long – during which time a case is introduced and completed and this temporal compression requires schematization of the complexities, ambiguities and uncertainties that we encounter in clinical practice. These programmes are also rife with egregious deviations from the norm; as dramas often depict exaggerated behaviours rather than reflect the nuances of 'real-life' health care. It is also important to recognize the potential for unexpected learning outcomes and insights due to social and cultural backgrounds distracting from the desired learning.

## Role of the Debrief

The processing cycle is key to the learning event and more time should be spent on the reflection than on the viewing of the clip. Therefore the use of TV dramas is often suited to small groups, to allow discussion to be undertaken. This debrief facilitates:

- ▶ analysis and evaluation of the themes identified.
- ▶ Reading the programmes not just as scientific materials but as cultural texts exploring psychosocial concepts identified.
- ▶ Students to understand behaviours and motivation beyond their own worldly views.
- ▶ Identification and exploration of unexpected learning outcomes and ensuring these have not obscured the desired learning experience.

## Questions to Pose

1. What did you see?
2. What did you hear?
3. How did you feel?
4. What did you think?
5. How might this impact on future clinical practice?

## Top tips for using TV drama clips in medical education

- ▶ Keep the clip brief (5 minutes maximum)
- ▶ Ideal for facilitated discussion in small groups
- ▶ Encourage discussion and actively explore students' considerations
- ▶ For larger groups, short clips can be used to gain attention or illustrate a point but cannot be explored in depth
- ▶ Clarify the learning points and acknowledge unexpected learning
- ▶ Be sensitive if using emotive topics
- ▶ Be aware of cultural differences
- ▶ Debrief and reflection should be the main focus of the session

## Summary

Medical dramas are an incredibly popular TV genre especially amongst medical learners, and they have become an increasingly accepted resource in learning experiences. Educators have recognised their pedagogical value, as they allow a host of complex medical and psychosocial issues to be presented to learners in an engaging format. Care has to be taken however to appreciate and overcome their limitations including recognising 'unexpected learning outcomes'. What is vital to their successful incorporation into teaching programme is the reflection component; which facilitates discussion and allows for a deeper learning experience.

## Further Information

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