

HUMOR AS A TEACHING STRATEGY IN MEDICAL EDUCATION**Dr. Sheldon James Goudinho* (DO, DNB) and Dr. Jasmine Mary Jacob (MS)**

Professor; Dept of Ophthalmology Dr Somervell Memorial CSI Medical College Karakonam; Trivandrum 695504.

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Sheldon James Goudinho**

Professor; Dept of Ophthalmology Dr Somervell Memorial CSI Medical College Karakonam; Trivandrum 695504.

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ABSTRACT

HUMOUR AS A TEACHING STRATEGY IN MEDICAL EDUCATION.

Introduction: Humour is a wonderful teaching aid for establishing a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. When used in the right way, humour can gain attention, stimulate creative thinking and enhance memory of the learners, motivate students to learn, gain knowledge, attend class and promote learning outcomes; creating a positive student-instructor relationship. **Objective:** to explore the opportunities for humour in the college classroom. This study explores the advantages of humour as an educational aid in medical education teaching; identifying opportunities for incorporating humour and studying the impact on learning outcomes in the classroom. **Materials and methods:** A comparative study conducted in Dr Somervell memorial CSI medical college; Karakonam where 25 MBBS students ;in the 5th semester were included. The Pre-test, Post test and a questionnaire were the instruments for data collection. Pre-test and Post –Test assessed quantitatively how much each students had gained Knowledge, Attitude and Practices after the lecture class while the Questionnaire revealed each students learning Experience. Comparison of the pre-test and post-test revealed whether humour had made any significant impact in the gain of knowledge of the topic among the two groups. Comparison of the responses in the qualitative assessment questionnaire revealed learning experience. **Results:** There was a statistical difference found; the 95% Confidence Interval was found to be – 7.373 to – 6.489. $P < 0.001$ (Highly Significant). **Conclusion:** There was a significant positive impact on Learning Outcomes as well as Qualitative Learning Experience of the Learner when Humour was incorporated in the Lectures.

KEYWORDS: Humor, Medical education, Teaching Learning.

INTRODUCTION: Humour is a wonderful teaching aid for establishing a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. Humour becomes especially useful when the classes are "Boring" which students may avoid, and even go to the extent of perceiving the topic as difficult because of previous negative experiences in that content area. Appropriate and timely humour in the college classroom can foster mutual openness and respect and contribute to overall teaching effectiveness.^[1, 2]

The role of the teacher in producing student-centered learning has been the subject of considerable discussion. Pollio and Humphreys (1996) found effective teaching revolved around the connection established between the instructor and the student. The behavior of the teacher influences the quality of instruction and the learning environment that is created (Lowman, 1994). It is the faculty members who primarily determine the quality of the experience in the classroom (Cross, 1993). Duffy and Jones (1995) describe the professor, content and student as interactive and interdependent, each shaped by the characteristics and requirements of the other two. Lowman found the most common descriptor of effective college teachers was "enthusiastic," and teachers are

considered to be both performers and motivators. As Loomans and Kolberg (1993) remarked, enthusiasm and laughter are often infectious.^[3,19]

Today's Teachers must be creative because of the short attention span of today's younger generations; besides the teacher plays a critical role in creating an atmosphere helping in optimal student learning. Humour is often identified as a teaching technique for developing a positive learning environment (Ferguson & Campinha-Bacote, 1989; Hill, 1988; Schwarz, 1989; Warnock, 1989; Walter, 1990). When a teacher establishes such an atmosphere, students are more likely to receive the knowledge and remember it too. Humour serves as a catalyst for classroom "magic". Instructors can foster classroom "magic" through improved communication with students by possessing a playful attitude and a willingness to use appropriate humour (Duffy & Jones, 1995).^[4]

The purpose of this article is to identify opportunities for humour in the college classroom. Effective educational humour when used wisely and in moderation at timely intervals can actually make medical education a laugh and learn process.

This study explores the merits of humour as an educational tool in medical education teaching; identifying opportunities for incorporating humour and studying the impact on learning outcomes in the classroom. When used in the right way, humour can gain attention, stimulate creative thinking and enhance memory of the learners, motivate students to learn, gain knowledge, attend class and promote learning outcomes; creating a positive student-instructor relationship.

Humour in the classroom can take many forms. In a classic study of humour in the college classroom, Bryant, Comisky, and Zillmann (1979) classified humour in lectures as jokes, riddles, puns, funny stories, humorous comments and other humorous items. Humour may be interjected in various phases of the instructional process. Starting each class with humor helps students relax and creates a positive atmosphere. Humorous breaks during a lesson promote learning by allowing the brain a "breather" to process and integrate lesson material (Loomans & Kolberg, 1993).^[19]

Walter (1990) noted that students who laugh reduce the need to act out and cause disturbances. Humor in the classroom is not the answer to all classroom management issues, but it is an excellent preventive measure and can often diffuse tense situations (Loomans & Kolberg, 1993).^[19]

OBJECTIVE

To study the impact on learning outcomes on Medical students by incorporating Humor in Medical Educational lectures.

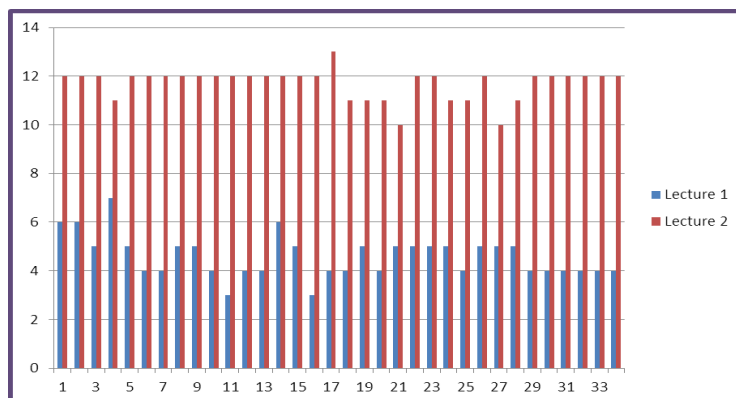
To assess the qualitative learning experience of the student.

METHODOLOGY

INCLUSION CRITERION: All the students who are ready and willing to participate in the study Project.

EXCLUSION CRITERION: students unwilling to participate in the study.

OBSERVATION



DIFFERENCE IN THE KNOWLEDGE GAINED IN LECTURE 1 AND LECTURE 2

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The study was conducted in Dr Somervell memorial CSI medical college; Karakonam. The design proposed was a comparative study with 25 MBBS students who were in the 5th semester. All the students were enrolled in the study after obtaining informed consent.

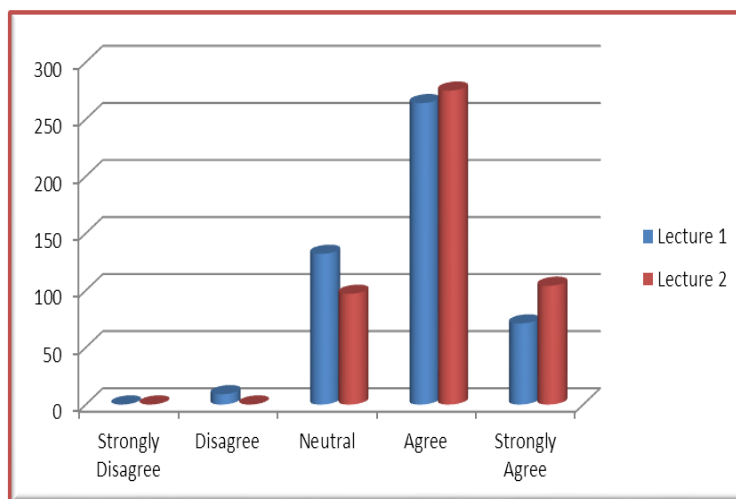
During the normal schedule of ophthalmology practical classes for the 5th semester MBBS examination students; the first part of the study was conducted. The material for the lecture was meticulously prepared and was delivered in a traditional method. The Pre-test, Post test and a questionnaire were the instruments for data collection. Pre-test and Post –Test assessment told us quantitatively how much each students has gained Knowledge, Attitude and Practices after the lecture class while the Questionnaire revealed each students learning Experience.

On Another day; at the same time of the day as the previous lecture; the second part of the study was conducted. The topic for the lecture 2 was selected of equal difficulty as lecture 1. The material for the lecture was meticulously prepared with timely spaced Humour and was delivered. The Pre-test, Post test and a questionnaire were the instruments for data collection. Pre-test and Post –Test assessment told us quantitatively how much each students had gained Knowledge, Attitude and Practices after the lecture class while the Questionnaire revealed each students learning Experience.

The results of the pre/post test assessments were compared to reveal whether humour had made any significant impact in the gain of knowledge of the topic among the two groups. Comparison of the responses in the qualitative assessment questionnaire was also done. For the duration of the class; the following was the breakup of activities:

1. 5 Minutes- Pre test
2. 40 Minutes – Lecture
3. 7 Minutes – Post Test and Questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS: Data was entered in SPSS and analysis was done with the paired t statistical test.



QUALITATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS

There was a significant positive impact on Learning Outcomes as well as Qualitative Learning Experience of the Learner when Humour was incorporated in the Lectures. There was a statistical difference found; the 95% Confidence Interval was found to be -7.373 to -6.489 . $P < 0.001$ (Highly Significant).

DISCUSSION

We bother too much about effective methods of teaching and don't give adequate importance to effective methods of learning. Teaching must include two major components sending and receiving information. Any communication methods that serve this purpose without destroying the objective could be considered as innovative methods of teaching.

The educational material is the information or message. The student is the receiver of the information. The delivery medium "chalk-and-talk" method. In such a lecture students assume a purely passive role and their concentration fades off after 15-20 minutes.^[5]

Teaching in classroom using chalk and talk is "one way flow" of information. Teachers often continuously talk for an hour without knowing students response and feedback. The material presented is only based on lecturer notes and textbooks. There is insufficient interaction with students in classroom. More emphasis has been given on theory without any practical and real life time situations. Learning from memorization but not understanding. Many a times the lecture is just a transfer of notes from the teachers' notebook to the students' notebook; without going through either's minds.^[5]

Laughter is a natural, universal phenomenon, with beneficial effects, both physical and psychological. Everyone loves a teacher with an infectious sense of humour. Cordial relationship is built and it has the innate ability to relax people and reduce tension. Students enjoy humour in forms of funny anecdotes.^[6]

To teach is to learn twice. Teachers should guide without dictating, and participate without dominating. LEARNING NEVER ENDS and a teacher need to

change to the ever changing needs of the learner in order to be a good facilitator.

Humour has been used in class room teaching. Despite a proven beneficial role in improving attendance and content assimilation, very few studies have reported humour as a tool in medical teaching. While no substitute for substance, humour as a teaching tool can create a more positive, fun, interesting environment that promotes learning. The creative development and expression of humour deals with "how to" teach, not what to teach. Perhaps there is no concrete empirical data to define its role in medical education.^[7, 8, 9]

There are very few studies which have examined use of humour as a tool in medical teaching. In a randomized controlled trial of using humour (any event that elicits laughter) to teach topics in orthopaedics, in a series of four lectures, to a batch of 90 medical students, Narula et al^[9] did find a substantial improvement in understanding of the concept of the subject covered in the lecture (68.17%). The students were divided into two groups (A and B) by lottery method. As reported by the students, in the experimental group (B) wherein humour was used during lecture, they felt more comfortable in class (74.99%), became more attentive (74.99%) and perceived that the teacher was friendlier to them (74.99%). In the fourth lecture, it was also observed that behaviour that implied negative attitudes such as turning up late for class and yawning were frequent in group A (without humour), whereas behaviour which indicated positive attitudes such as writing notes and eye contact were noted more frequently in group B. The students in the latter group also progressively scored better in the post-class evaluation tests.

Students may retain the subject matter more, if the humour reinforces the class content. The main reason is

that it gains attention interest. Students are less intimidated and less inhibited about asking questions or making comments. Students are more likely to attend classes where humour is used and to skip classes that are boring. There is a strong correlation between class attendance and student performance.^[10, 11] increased learner comprehension and cognitive retention, as well as improved student attitudes toward the subject and the instructor have been reported.^[5, 12, 22]

CONCLUSION

There was a significant positive impact on Learning Outcomes as well as Qualitative Learning Experience of the Learner when Humour was incorporated in the Lectures.

The 95% Confidence Interval was found to be – 7.373 to – 6.489. $P < 0.001$ (Highly Significant).

We recommend that Teachers must be creative by using Humour to create an environment conducive to optimal student learning.

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