

Fishbowl discussion on Renin hormone as a small group teaching tool for First-year Medical Students

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In India, small group teaching (SGT) is being implemented from the academic year 2019-2020. The main driving force for small group teaching is that it is student-driven compared to conventional lectures or tutorials, where the teacher plays an essential role in delivering the content (Jacob, 2019). There are many small group teaching methods, such as buzz group, brainstorming, and role play. The fishbowl method is a good conversational approach that can enhance students' communication skills and afford elaborative discussion from simple to complex. Limiting the content of the discussion by fencing and framing the method with pre-posted questions is also possible (Kundoor et al., 2019).

Nineteen students were given instructions on fishbowl discussion through video demonstrations, and a review article titled "Renin: a friend or foe?" (Brown, 2007) was shared. The students were made to form 2 concentric circles, and the roles of the inner and outer groups were explained. All queries were clarified before the discussion. After 45 minutes of learning time, the inner group of ten students listed the benefits and harmful effects of the renin hormone on the body during their allotted time of 15 minutes. Meanwhile, the outer group of nine students observed the whole activity, wrote down the salient findings, and provided feedback to the inner group regarding coverage of the essential points from the article, active participation by all in the discussion, time management etc.

Active participation was seen among most. A few students, though initially hesitant, got into the discussion as the session progressed. The discussion showed that the students grasped the topic sufficiently with regard to the rightfulness of the content. Students' feedback was collected after the activity regarding its usefulness through Google forms, maintaining anonymity. Seventeen out of 19 students reported that this activity was helpful and enabled them to understand better the topic taught. One student felt this activity was not helpful, and one student chose not to respond.

This activity turned out to be an effective small group discussion as the students learned how to read a review article, stress critical points, provide a compelling conclusion, and enhanced group dynamics and communication skills among students. The challenges faced by the facilitator included the need for video demonstration to make the students understand the fishbowl discussion method. Choosing a review article appropriate for first-year medical students can also be challenging. Ensuring active participation from all students, especially the outer circle, can be difficult, but efforts to engage them by giving them some cues and prompting are helpful.

Reference

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