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## “Passing the Parcel” Game in a broken lecture: a classroom strategy

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### Abstract

Lecture method is a popular method of imparting knowledge. Long lectures may be boring and sleep inducing. We tried a simple strategy to keep the students awake and alert during lecture classes. One hour lecture class was broken into four segments and a “passing the parcel” game was incorporated in between the four segments of the lecture. In this activity, the most important points of the day’s lecture were told by the lecturer to the students sitting in two corners of the class and the students were asked to tell it to the next student. Passing of the information continued till it reached everyone in the class. The positive feedback by the students indicated that they enjoyed these lectures. The exam scores of the questions related to the information passed from one student to the other were significantly higher compared to the scores of questions on other topics.

*Keywords:* passing the parcel, broken lecture, active learning, medical education, lecture, anatomy

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### Introduction

Lecture method is one of the oldest and most popular methods of teaching. The lecture method can be delivered to a large group of students, it can be used to arouse interest in a subject and it can clarify and complement text material. During a lecture the lecturer can precisely determine the aims, content, organization, pace and direction of a presentation. However, during the lectures for large groups the passive role of the students may hinder learning. Long lectures can be boring and sleep inducing to student. Studies have shown that the concentration of the students starts declining within 20 minutes of

the lecture (Stuart & Rutherford, 1978). Hence, it is important to the lecturer to keep breaking monotony of the lecture at regular intervals to keep the students awake and alert. Broken lecture (Nayak, 2006) is a method where the lecturer breaks the lectures during regular intervals and gives some activities to the students. We tried “passing the parcel” game in a broken lecture of one hour duration.

### Methods

At Melaka Manipal Medical College, the first year Medical Curriculum is divided into four blocks of ten weeks each. In Block 3 students learn the anatomy of the abdomen. We tried the above mentioned activity during anatomy lectures of block 3 for a batch consisting of 136 students. At the beginning of the lecture, two important points from the day’s lecture were told to two students sitting at two corners of the class. They were asked to pass the information to the student sitting next to them. The next student was asked to pass it to the next student. This way the information was passed to the entire class within two to three minutes. The teacher walked from one place to the other to ensure that the information was being transferred properly. The students were told that each one of them had to pass the information at least to one student and to a maximum of three students. After the initial activity, the lecturer started the lecture. During the lecture, similar “passing the parcel”

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sessions were conducted after 15, 30 and 45 minutes of the lecture. Each session was about 2-3 minutes. In a lecture on anatomy of vermiform appendix, the following points were sent as “parcels” from one end to the other end of the class

1. Retrocaecal position is the commonest position of the appendix.
2. Pain of the appendix is referred to the umbilicus.
3. Mc Burney’s point is the point of maximum tenderness in acute appendicitis.
4. Acute appendicitis is characterised by fever, vomiting and tenderness of Mc Burney’s point.
5. Base of the appendix corresponds to the junction between medial 2/3 and lateral 1/3 of right spino-umbilical line.
6. Mesoappendix contains appendicular vessels.
7. Wall of the appendix contains lymphatic follicles.
8. Appendix is a derivative of midgut.

The students were not told or hinted about the importance and weight of the topics used for “passing the parcel” in the forthcoming examination. The subsequent examination had a multiple True/False question paper having a total of 120 True/False statements. Ten statements chosen from those passed to the class during this activity were given in this examination. The students were asked to give an anonymous written feedback about this activity at the end of the block.

### Result

There were 136 students who participated in the activity and took the block examination. The examination had 120 questions, out of which 10 were from “passing the parcel” game. The average of students answering the 10 questions (chosen from “passing the parcel” game) correctly was 133 (97.8%) and the average of students answering the other 110 questions was 76 (55.9%).

In the feedback collected by the students, there was no negative comment about this activity. Generally students seemed to like this method.

### Specific comments by the students about the activity:

- It was fun playing this game.
- It made me alert and awake during the entire class.
- It helped me to communicate with other students.
- It highlighted the important areas of the lecture.
- This activity should be used in all the classes.
- It is a simple but effective method to keep us alert.

### Discussion

We as educators, have to make constant effort to make the lectures effective and interesting. Breaking the monotony of the lecture during long lectures is essential to keep students awake and alert especially in large classes because it is not easy to maintain eye contact with every student. When the students sit in the same position for one full hour, the blood circulation will also slow down. So it would be better to provide a break and make students move a bit during the lectures. The current “passing the parcel” game strategy helped students to move and talk a bit while passing the information to others. It is clear from the examination scores that this activity was more effective in making them remember the items shared with others better than those which they learned on their own. Most of them said they enjoyed the class and the strategy kept them awake and alert. We tend to remember the things that we enjoy doing. So in a class, it is better to have strategies which make the topic enjoyable rather than a compulsion. “Passing the parcel” game can be used in a small group or large group session and in any subject.

### References

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