

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Teaching health promotion in real-life settings: A method for small groups

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Abstract

This paper describes the implementation of an exercise to teach and assess pharmacists' health promotion skills in a postgraduate course. Students were required to design and deliver a 20 minute session to schoolchildren (aged 10-11) on a health-related topic of their choice. Quantitative and qualitative feedback from students and schoolchildren, as well as the tutors' own reflections, suggested that the exercise was well received, provided mutual benefit to participating schools and the pharmacy students, but that it may be particularly suited to small groups.

Keywords: *Health promotion, School health*

Introduction

The pharmacist's role in promoting health and providing lifestyle advice is becoming increasingly recognized and developed in Great Britain (Anderson, 2007). Recent policy changes require community pharmacists to engage in health promotion campaigns within their pharmacy (Department of Health, 2005) and more recently pharmacists have been encouraged to take health messages out to the 'healthy population' (Department of Health, 2008). Health promotion training can change attitudes and behaviour and encourage the pharmacist to take an advisory role; however training in undergraduate and postgraduate education is found to be lacking (Anderson, 2000). This report describes the development and use of a health promotion training exercise for postgraduates.

Context

The Postgraduate Diploma in Pharmacy (Overseas Pharmacy Assessment Programme) at the University of Brighton enables pharmacists, qualified in non-European Union countries, to register to practise in Great Britain. Of the six modules taken in this course, one is the 'Pharmaceutical Skills' module which includes a health promotion exercise.

Students, in randomly selected groups, are required to develop a health promotion message, including sourcing materials and using the most appropriate form of delivery of

the message. Each group is allocated a total budget of £100. The exercise is assessed on the standard of the final delivery and by assessment of a reflective diary each student is required to keep through the duration of the project.

The exercise

In the academic year starting October 2007, the final presentations were delivered in local primary schools. Schools were chosen as the location for the presentations in response to the Governmental initiative "Primary School/ Primary Health Care Links" which aims to develop links between community health care professionals and school children (DoH, 2007). Additionally, it meshed well with part of the strategic aims of the university to encourage greater community engagement.

The pupil group selected was year 6 (children aged 10 to 11 years), and two local primary schools were recruited to 'host' the exercise: one from the private sector (75 pupils) and one from the state sector (92 pupils). Both schools had four classes in year 6.

To address some of the challenges posed by dealing with younger schoolchildren, two training sessions were delivered by the leader of the faculty Science and Engineering Ambassadors scheme. They focused on aiming the message to a young but enquiring audience, and some practical points

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on being in the school environment.

All 32 pharmacy Diploma students were involved and were split into eight groups of four. Each group set up their health promotion session in a separate room, and the school pupils, in their class groups, rotated rooms in order to see the four different sessions. (In one school four classrooms were used, in the other, two laboratories, the school hall and the library were used). Each session lasted for 15 minutes with 5 minutes to allow the pupils to move between classrooms.

The topics delivered by the pharmacy students were: head lice, smoking, nutrition, walking to school, exercise, hand hygiene and 'the two faces of medicine'. Most groups presented using a mixture of PowerPoint slides and props and presented the material collaboratively, sharing the talking among the group members.

Three academic staff attended, each accompanying a class as they progressed through the presentations. Each assessed all four groups and the mean was taken as the first part of the assessment. The second part was assessment of the reflective diary, giving a mark for the individual student to add to the group mark.

At the end of the final session, pupils were asked to fill in a simple sheet saying which session they liked best and why. The responses were not used in the formal assessment of the students, but provided interesting feedback.

Evaluation

Student performance

Group presentation marks ranged from 44% to 70% (mean = 60.3%, SD = 8.58%). Whilst there was some variability in the marks from different markers, inter-marker reliability was fairly high (Cronbach's alpha = .69). Attempts were made to make the experience comparable at the two schools, however a significant difference in the scores achieved was observed, $t(6) = 5.80, p = .001$. Students presenting at the state school achieved higher scores on average (mean = 33.92, SD = 1.17) than students presenting at the private school (mean = 25.67, SD = 2.60). This may have been related to a number of factors including pupil response, marker response, school environment and ethos or student ability.

Diary marks ranged from 30% to 96% (mean = 68.1%, SD = 14.4%). No correlation was found between individual diary marks and their group presentation marks suggesting that the marks reflected two distinct competencies.

Student feedback

Students were given an evaluation questionnaire three weeks after the exercise. This included questions on their overall impressions of the exercise, recommendations for its future implementation, the academic and administrative support they received, and the skills they felt they developed during the exercise (see Appendix 1 for full questionnaire). To encourage honest feedback students were assured of the anonymity of their responses.

Nineteen (59.4%) of the 32 students returned the questionnaire. All thought the exercise was 'good' or 'very good' and appropriate for their educational level; all felt they

had received adequate academic support; all but one felt that the resources were adequate (one respondent commented that they would have rather presented in a classroom than the library); and all but one thought the exercise should be used again in future years. Students commented that they felt that the exercise developed their communication skills (8 respondents), ability to work in a team (8), presentation skills (7), and their organisational skills (7). The most common type of response, when asked how they would like to see the exercise changed, was to enforce more structure on the groups, i.e. to allocate a topic, or a leader, or to allocate tasks to group members (4 out of 9 suggestions). It should be noted that completion of the questionnaire was not mandatory hence the low response rate, consequently these findings are based on a very small sample and should not be generalized to the whole class.

Whilst the formal feedback was very positive, some negative experiences were expressed in the reflective diaries. For instance, many of the students commented on the difficulties of working in a group and their anxieties about giving the presentation. It was clear, however, that the exercise challenged students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to reflect on how they can best operate within a team. For instance, one student commented:

"Working in this group brought to light what I have learnt, that people are different and would sometimes have different opinions on issues, but it is not a bad thing if we can learn to be accommodating and give each other a fair hearing"

School feedback

Informal feedback from schools and pupils suggested that the day had been well-received. Both schools said that the pupils had enjoyed the presentations and that they would like to host the event again. Pupils' comments on the feedback forms indicated that they preferred the presentations that were more interactive and where the presenters were approachable. The favoured presentation of the children did not correlate with the presentation awarded the highest mark by the tutors. The pupils' criteria was obviously different to the tutors and it may be worthwhile to include this in the students overall mark in future.

Tutors reflections

This was a different way of teaching than the traditional lecture format and as such it did require more organisation. More students would necessarily result in more organisational burden and resources thus the exercise may be better suited to small groups. From the perspective of the tutors the students did seem to enjoy working on a project that had a practical application and students appeared to get a sense of accomplishment after the event. However it was clear that some groups had difficulties deciding on a topic and working cohesively as a team, tutors also became aware of the necessity to monitor the selection of material and information delivered in the exercise.

Future plans

Education in pharmacy is increasingly using more diverse teaching and learning strategies (Owusu-Daaka and Smith, 2007). It is mirroring changes in the profession by moving away from a product-focus to including more reflective and patient-focussed components (Droege, 2003). This exercise was an attempt to develop and assess students’ skills at delivering a health promotion message in a socially meaningful environment.

The exercise was considered successful and will be run again but some amendments will be made. For instance, students will be given more initial guidance in terms of communicating with children, working in a team and coming up with topics. Students will be required to do a practice run of their presentation in front of the tutors one or two weeks before the school presentation. This will be beneficial to the students in that they will gain some practice and formative feedback, it will also allow the tutors to consider the sensitivity of the material being presented and comment on its suitability for school children.

It would appear that there may have been some inequality of experience for students between the two schools. In future it may be better to use just one school, or to select schools that are more similar in ethos.

The mutual benefit of taking the health promotion exercise out to schools is an appealing aspect of this exercise. Future

work could look at how this exercise can be adapted for use with larger groups.

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APPENDIX 1: Evaluation questionnaire for pharmacy students

Dear student

We would like to get your feedback on the recent health promotion exercise you completed in schools in Brighton. Your feedback is completely anonymous and will help us in future course development, so please be honest in your responses.

How would you rate the health promotion exercise overall?

Very Good / Good / Satisfactory / Poor / Very Poor

Would you recommend that the exercise is used for future OSPAP students and why? Yes / No

Please comment _____

Do you think the exercise was appropriate for your educational level?

Yes No, too easy No, too difficult

Did you receive adequate support from your tutors? Yes / No

If NO, please comment _____

Were the resources/facilities satisfactory? Yes / No

If NO, please comment _____

What skills do you think you developed in doing the exercise?

Which part of the exercise did you find most useful and why?

How would you like to see the exercise changed if it was to be used again?

Thanks for taking the time to fill out this form. Your honest feedback is much appreciated!

APPENDIX 2: Feedback form for school children

Health Promotion Day

We hope you enjoyed the afternoon, and we'd like you to help us by telling us which part you liked best today and why.

Which session did you like best?

Why did you like this one most?