Developing Clinical Skills in Undergraduate Exercise Physiology Students: A ‘Case Study Tutorial’ Teaching Method

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Abstract:
The case study tutorial (CST) teaching method has been used successfully in undergraduate medical teaching for many years¹ which has provided the impetus for its application to undergraduate Exercise Physiology. CSTs provide an opportunity for exercise physiology students to apply theoretical concepts in musculoskeletal rehabilitation to patient cases with presentations commonly encountered in daily clinical practice. Clinical decision making and critical thinking regarding evidence based best practice and patient care are key learning attributes that students are required to demonstrate. This contrasts teaching modalities such as clinical laboratories or VIVA assessment where the learning attributes are more black and white. CSTs are led by a practicing clinician with 20 active and passive students organised into four teams of five. Active participation is marked by two academics and the passive students. Passive students reflect on the CST discussion before completing assessment tasks involving patient specific exercise treatment and correspondence. Four CSTs account for 40% of total assessment (active participation 20%; CST assignments 20%). Feedback informally and through myExperience supports the CST as a relevant, engaging and enjoyable learning modality. Marking and delivering individualised feedback for active participants needs to be further refined. Formal assessment of the effectiveness of CSTs compared to more didactic styles of teaching for developing undergraduate exercise physiology clinical skills would be beneficial.