BOOK REVIEW: SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

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"The integration of competency-based medical education (CBME) into the medical curriculum in 2019 marked a significant shift in medical education in India. This approach emphasizes the acquisition of specific competencies deemed essential for medical practice, thereby necessitating innovative pedagogical strategies to foster comprehensive learning among medical students. One such pivotal component introduced within the updated curriculum is self-directed learning (SDL), recognized as a vital means to cultivate lifelong learning skills and adaptability in medical professionals. Against this backdrop, the book on "Self-directed Learning for Medical Students" authored by Dr. Kailash Charokar, MS, MBA (HA), PGDHA, CMCL-FAIMER Fellow, NMC ACME; Dr. Vishnu Pal, PhD (Med Anatomy), NMC ACME; Dr. Yuganti Vaidya, MD (Anatomy), NMC ACME; and Dr. Tukaram Prabhu K, Msc. Medical Microbiology emerges as a timely useful resource. The contributors are experienced faculty members of the institutional medical education unit with a special interest in SDL in CMBE (SDL study circle team). The team has experience and supports the implementation of longitudinal educational project study in the different phases of undergraduate CBME MBBS curriculum in the subject disciplines.

Published by Blue Rose Publishers in January 2024 (Paperback: 72 pages, ISBN: 9789359891217) is a resource which fills a critical gap by addressing the pressing need for effective integration of SDL into the medical curriculum amidst the transition to CBME. By the comprehensive compilation on planning, implementing, and evaluating SDL sessions, the module equips medical teachers with the tools necessary to nurture SDL competencies among students. It provides educators with innovative strategies to navigate the complexities of implementing SDL within the CBME framework. Furthermore, the module introduces structured cooperative SDL as a novel approach, facilitating collaboration and knowledge transfer among learners while fostering professionalism. This module not only addresses the current demands of medical education but also paves the way for transformative pedagogical practices that empower students to become lifelong learners and competent health-care professionals.

The concept of SDL is well explained in the initial part of the module, emphasizing the importance of students' readiness and intrinsic motivation. The authors illustrate the journey of SDL in the medical curriculum, transitioning from a cooperative approach to a collaborative learning environment. The authors explain their approach to SDL as structured cooperative SDL (SC-SDL), wherein the principle of cooperative learning is amalgamated with social constructivist theory for SDL sessions. This approach empowers learners to overcome academic and behavioral challenges, facilitating the transfer of knowledge to the workplace while demonstrating professionalism. When employing the SC-SDL strategy, the teacher's role transforms from an information-giving authority to that of a facilitator. The planning of SDL sessions includes ensuring the availability of necessary teaching aids and infrastructure, faculty development, student sensitization, and the identification of SDL topics. The authors have provided two templates in this section for SDL planning in a discipline and for a particular SDL topic, along with a template for planning SC-SDL.

The next section in the module describes the methodology for implementing SDL sessions, starting with the assessment of students for SDL readiness using various scales. The authors have suggested that each topic selected for SDL should be conducted in two contact sessions with a gap of 7–14 days between them. During this intersession period, when SDL will take place, students will be engaged in the learning process. They will be monitored by facilitators, and feedback will also be provided to students. This section also describes the roles of students, teachers, and the department in SDL, as well as the challenges encountered by students, faculty, and administration in implementing SDL.

In the section of "Assessment of students in SDL," the authors have suggested that students should be assessed for both SDL competencies (including both cognitive and affective aspects) and subject-specific content learning. The acquisition of SDL skills in students' needs to be assessed during the learning process, as SDL is an ongoing process for students rather than a final outcome. The authors have proposed several methods for assessing students during SDL sessions, including reflective writing by students and grading reflections by teachers. This should be followed by providing feedback to students on both the learning outcomes achieved on the subject topic selected for SDL and the metacognitive aspects of students' learning, including social skills acquired. The authors have also provided a template of rubric scale for students' assessment. In SDL, students are also expected to evaluate themselves (self-evaluation) and their peers (peer-evaluation) and provide feedback to their peers.

The section on program evaluation is the need of the hour. Here, authors have explained Kirkpatrick's levels of program evaluation and have suggested the use of an outcome and evaluation matrix. In addition, they have recommended that to obtain students' perceptions of the SDL program, a feedback questionnaire should be designed (including both closed and open-ended questions using positive and negative items related to process and outcome evaluation) and pre-validated. Faculty feedback can also be obtained using a similar questionnaire or through focused group discussions. This process should be followed by implementing appropriate corrective or remedial measures for continuous quality improvement.

The module concludes with an appendix providing an example of the planning of SC-SDL, which will assist teachers in planning their SDL sessions. In addition, the authors have included a list of references for further reading. The in-text citations provided throughout the module offer easy access to the literature. I feel that the majority of the readers would find it simple to understand, assimilate, and apply in practice. Adding a summary at the end of each chapter could indeed enhance the handbook's effectiveness by reinforcing key points and aiding

Jain

comprehension. Feedback from teachers, peers, and other stakeholders is an integral part of student learning which may be emphasized with a dedicated section.

In the ever-evolving landscape of medical education, this comprehensive module explores a multitude of facets and principles using clear language, providing an optimal level of theoretical foundation to ensure readers grasp the essential concepts. Notably, the authors have focused on implementing a structured SDL program for medical undergraduates, supplementing their explanations with straightforward examples, enhancing the module's exceptional readability.

This resource fills the gap with respect to concept, conduct, and the actual meaning of SDL cited by the regulatory bodies in the CBME curriculum directed toward empowering the medical students as lifelong learner. I strongly recommend this module to medical teachers seeking to enhance their pedagogical practices and adapt to the evolving demands of medical education. What sets this module apart is its practical approach to implementing SDL within the CBME framework. By offering concrete strategies for planning, implementing, and assessing SDL sessions, this module empowers educators to foster a culture of lifelong learning among medical students. Moreover, the

incorporation of SC-SDL presents a unique opportunity for collaborative learning and professional development, equipping students with the skills necessary for success in the healthcare field. In addition, the module's comprehensive coverage of assessment methods, including rubric scales and peer evaluation, ensures that educators have the tools needed to effectively evaluate student progress and promote continuous improvement. Overall, this module serves as an invaluable resource for medical teachers striving to cultivate self-directed learners and prepare future generations of health-care professionals."

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

I, Dr. Vaishali Jain, am the sole author of this review on book "Self-directed Learning for Medical Students" authored by Dr. Kailash Charokar. I affirm that this review is original and ethically conducted.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

AUTHORS FUNDING

None.