

Problem-Based Learning in Clinical Education

Innovation and Change in Professional Education

VOLUME 8

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Problem-Based Learning in Clinical Education

The Next Generation

 Springer

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ISBN 978-94-007-2514-0 e-ISBN 978-94-007-2515-7
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2515-7
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2011941197

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*This book is dedicated to the founding
generation of PBL educators and in memory
of Howard Barrows.*

Howard Barrows: An Appreciation

By all conventional metrics (papers and books published, citation counts, awards received), Howard Barrows was a remarkably influential educator. He was on the faculty of McMaster Medical School from 1970 to 1981 after which he joined the faculty of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine where he retired in 1999 as the Chair of Medical Education. He has had over 400 journal articles and 19 books, received several distinguished awards, including the John P. Hubbard Award by the National Board of Medical Examiners, the Abraham Flexner award for medical education and the Claude Bernard Lectureship from the American Physiological Society. He co-founded *Teaching and Learning in Medicine: An International Journal*. His papers, particularly on problem-based learning and the tutorial process, have been widely cited with several receiving more than 200 citations. What this listing of achievements fails to capture is the essential grace and humility of the person behind it all.

In the summer of 2007, I organized a symposium on Student-Centred Learning at McMaster University and invited Howard to participate. He graciously agreed and his quiet presence made a tremendous impression on all participants. Since then we kept in touch. On several occasions, I invited him to talk to my students, particularly about his invention of the ‘simulated patient’ approach at the University of Southern California and as the Director of Neuromedicine at the Los Angeles County Hospital. That approach has been adopted globally and used for the training not only of physicians but other health care professionals. The students found him adorable. They just could not believe that someone who had achieved so much could be so modest and unassuming. He was the master facilitator, quiet, effective, sharp and critical. We were working together on a collection of essays to be written by university teachers extolling the excitement and fascination of teaching. This was to be a counter-thrust to the many books and articles bemoaning the decline of university teaching at the expense of research. His essay was entitled ‘An Accidental Educator: How an unsuspecting neurologist became enmeshed in the field of medical education and beyond’.

Howard Barrows was very special and when I think of him, Hamlet's remarks about his late father come to mind, 'He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again'. Problem-based learning has lost a great champion and one of its finest practitioners. I hope that this collection of essays would be read widely as a tribute to a great teacher.

Patangi K. Rangachari

Preface

This work originated in Hong Kong, a territory, like most regions across the globe, currently embarking on widespread reform across both secondary and higher education. Over a decade earlier, clinical programmes at The University of Hong Kong undertook a radical curriculum overhaul and implemented problem-based learning (PBL) curricula. As we in Hong Kong and as colleagues around the globe prepare for further reviews and reforms, it is timely to reflect on practice and to consider the role of PBL in education, in general, but for the purposes of this volume, in clinical education, in particular.

The current research on PBL presented in this volume allows us to not only review practice and draw on collective experience but also reaffirms our commitment to integrated, small-group and inquiry-based learning. Indeed, we argue that the relevance of PBL as an instructional approach is perhaps even more evident today than when first developed over 40 years ago.

In preparing this volume, we have organized the chapters around three key research themes: student learning outcomes in PBL; the role of new learning technologies in PBL; and examining ‘inside’ the PBL process. Hmelo-Silver and Eberbach’s introduction on PBL and modern educational theory provides a clear rationale for PBL as an instructional method and also signals some areas for future research. In our concluding chapter, we reflect on the contribution of the volume to current educational research in the field and close with a proposed agenda for the ‘next generation’ of PBL research.

Susan Bridges
Colman McGrath
Tara L. Whitehill
July, 2011

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our contributors from across the globe who have shared their practice and undertaken principled research to assist understandings of ‘how’ PBL is enacted in clinical education. In addition, we wish to thank the series editor and staff at Springer for constructive review and ongoing advice. We would also like to acknowledge The University of Hong Kong Strategic Research Theme ‘Sciences of Learning’ for funding support towards the preparation of this volume and the invaluable assistance of Ms Rita Suen Po Chu with manuscript preparation.

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Julia Davies is an Associate Professor in Oral Biology at the Faculty of Odontology, Malmö University, Sweden. Her recent focus has been on development of the spiral curriculum within the Malmö PBL undergraduate dental course as well as integration of the basic sciences into clinical contexts within the curriculum. She is currently responsible for coordinating the first-year undergraduate course 'The Oral Ecosystem'. Her research interests are centred around how oral microorganisms in biofilms interact with the oral environment in health and disease as well as how students develop their learning skills within a PBL environment and the development of optimal methods for student assessment within PBL curricula.

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