

WORKSHOP REPORT

Experience from a Workshop on Counseling Skills for Postgraduate Students

Ahmad Fuad Abdul Rahim & Muhamad Saiful Bahri Yusoff

Medical Education Department, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Context

Counseling skills were realized as important elements in postgraduate curriculum. The Postgraduate Personal and Professional Development Programme was introduced to facilitate and coordinate training programmes in such areas in the postgraduate training period. We describe in this article a counseling skills development programme known as the 'Specialist as a Counselor Workshop' in our institution.

Reason for the idea

The importance of promoting and nurturing positive personal qualities and professional development among future clinical specialists are becoming more apparent within healthcare. Many evidence showed that it has effects on the quality of care provided. This workshop was developed to enhance postgraduate students' self-awareness of the importance of counseling skills and to assist them in developing self-improvement strategies to develop their counseling skills. It offers a unique opportunity to develop students' skills in such areas.

Methods

The workshop was run over one day. The workshop was run by academic staff from the Medical Education Department. The objectives of this workshop were to enable participants to explore the concept of counseling, to understand the importance of counseling skills and to develop self-improvement strategies in improving their counseling skills for becoming better postgraduate students as well as future specialists. They were given some input regarding the concept of counseling and the importance of counseling skills related to postgraduate study as well as a future specialist. Role-play and discussion sessions were held to explore the practical components of counseling. After going through the practical sessions, they should be able to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, and develop their own self-

improvement strategies to strengthen their counseling skills development in the future.

Evaluation

A total of 20 postgraduate students participated in the workshop. At the end of the workshop, evaluation questionnaires were distributed to participants. The questionnaire solicited participants' ratings regarding the usefulness of input given, facilitators and the discussion sessions. Participants were also asked to rate the success of the workshop in achieving the objectives and its overall usefulness. In an open-ended section participants were asked to describe the most important thing they have learnt from the workshop as well as the most important thing that can be improved. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 12. The evaluation showed that the participants rated the overall workshop as highly useful (91.7%) and as having achieved the objectives (94.7%). All sessions were rated as highly useful. Among the comments written in the open-ended section regarding the most important thing participants have learnt from the workshop, 47% wrote comments related to improved self-awareness. The importance of counseling skills was commented by 35.6% of them. Another 17.4% appreciated the usefulness of increased knowledge such as counseling skills.

Corresponding Author: Dr Ahmad Fuad Abdul Rahim, Lecturer, Department of Medical Education, School of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 16150 Kubang Kerian, Kelantan, Malaysia.

Email: fuad@kb.usm.my