

Clinical Skill Laboratories: A New Trend of Medical Teaching

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At the time of independence, West Pakistan had two medical colleges, but today there are more than one hundred medical colleges and medical universities.¹ Pakistan inherited medical curriculum from the Britain at the time of partition. It has produced excellent results. Many competent, and disciplined doctors were produced, who proved their competency not only in Pakistan but also at international level.

The traditional system of medical education has been questioned and it is agreed that new teaching and training strategies must be incorporated into medical curriculum. It is known fact that medical teaching is lifelong learning system, which includes continuous medical education (CME), and application of new skills, the continuing professional development (CPD).^{2,3} Besides this, a physician has to develop / learn critical thinking, managerial skills, advocacy, communication skills, professional values and attitudes in discharge of their duties.

During the last two decades teaching has been transformed into objectivity oriented methodology, and critical reasoning. Newer system of education is introduced and traditional annual examination is changed to semester system. Teacher centered approach is changed to student centered approach, doctor oriented practice to patient oriented practice, isolated to integrated care, and hospital based to community based approach to various diseases. Conventional teaching based upon lecturing and demonstrations is changing to multimodal system like group interactive sessions, small groups discussions, self directed learning, patient based learning, team based learning, and performance based learning with small projects and assignments.^{4,5}

Skills which are not taught correctly will continuously practiced poorly. This may be due to poor management control when teacher or supervisors are not available and students practice on their own.⁶⁻⁷

With large number of students and lack of clinical material including patients, a new concept of clinical skill laboratories developed. In this system variety of standardized clinical approaches are used for students, to receive complementary training. Implementation of this new trend in institutions in Pakistan is not uniform. This system can provide hands-on learning experience before applying on patients for example, vascular anastomosis, intestinal anastomosis etc. In addition to above, with skill laboratories all students can get equal opportunity to learn. Similarly a uniform assessment of students can also be made.⁸ These laboratories also contribute to several curriculum competencies like interactive sessions with patients, physical examination, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, problem solving skills, professional attitudes and ethics, team work management skills etc. In addition clinical skills laboratories are also suitable for enhancement of other skills such as research, critical appraisal, evidence based medicine, scientific presentations, information technology and computing.⁸

The training can be performed on models, manikins, screen based simulators, and interactive simulators. Proper orientation, supervision, support material and guidelines are helpful for safe and correct use of laboratory. The physical facilities, administration, organization, and types of models used depend upon local requirement, number of students and staff, available space and local conditions.

High cost of purchasing, maintaining and updating of material and equipment is an issue. However its utility is well established. PM & DC must enforce it as a part of undergraduate / postgraduate medical curriculum.

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