Developing a new unit in a new Pharmacy curriculum

Betty Exintaris

Drug Discovery Biology, Monash Institute Of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Australia

Background. As of 2017, the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at Monash University introduced a new Bachelor of Pharmacy (Honours)/Master of Pharmacy degree. The new degree seeks to equip graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge to lead practice in the ever-changing world of healthcare and medicine.

Aim. To develop a new, foundational, double credit point unit (How the Body Works).

Methods. The way in which the unit was to be delivered differed significantly from previous iterations of the unit. Firstly, the unit was a double credit point unit. Secondly the unit was delivered using a very structured approach: the 'DEAR' model. Briefly, on a weekly basis, for every 4 hours of pre-learning Discovery (the information was presented in Moodle books, including revision questions), there were 4 hours of integrated lectures (students Explored the discovery material using questions / scenarios posed by staff) and 4 hours of workshops (where students Applied the information from discovery and the integrated lectures. Finally students were asked to continuously Reflect on their learning. An important aspect of the new unit was the focus on skill development. In How the Body works we focussed on communication and teamwork.

Results. As a team, we developed and delivered a dynamic unit incorporating the new teaching approach. Staff reported that students were better communicators and team players by the end of the unit. Exam and unit results were noticeably higher (~20%) than the previous year.

Given the new teaching approach, it was not surprising that the overall unit evaluation result was lower than other years (~3.5/5 vs ~4.5/5). Students provided meaningful feedback by identifying areas which could be improved.

Conclusion. Utilising a different teaching approach, we developed a new unit as part of the new Pharmacy curriculum which focuses on skill development. Qualitative data suggests that the students were noticeably better communicators and team players by the end of the unit. Exam results also demonstrated that the students performed comparably better than last year. Feedback obtained from staff and students will be used to further develop the unit.