Theatre Techniques to Enhance Communication Skills and Cultural Competence in Dentistry
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Project

- Innovative Idea: To incorporate the teaching and practice of acting exercises into our predoctoral curriculum, in order to enhance interpersonal communication skills, empathy, and cultural competence in students of dentistry.
- Project: Develop a series of 3 instructional videos demonstrating various theatre techniques and exercises to build awareness and improve communication skills. The exercises will help students focus on the present moment, develop self-awareness, as well as recognize verbal and nonverbal cues. Interactions between dentists and patients will also be examined.
- The videos will complement the school’s standardized patient program, as well as current communication, empathy, and cultural competence training.
- Instructional videos are a useful design to demonstrate theatrical skills and exercises.

Rationale

- Cultural competence has direct implications for the delivery of care and the achievement and maintenance of health. 1
- One way to diminish barriers and improve interactions with patients of diverse backgrounds, values, beliefs, and behaviors, is to build interpersonal and communication skills. 2
- Teaching students interpersonal skills and values has been challenging and current educational resources are limited. 3,4
- Actors commonly employ techniques to build interpersonal skills and empathy, such as the Meisner Acting Technique. While such techniques have been approved in medicine to improve patient-provider interactions, we are unaware of integration of acting exercises into dental school curricula.5

Collaboration and Resources

- Financial support through 2016 Innovation in Education Awards Program (Provost’s Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence)
- Collaboration between the School of Dental Medicine and the Department of Theatre Arts
- Supported by Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (Jean O’Donnell, DMD, MEd)
- Collaborating faculty: Nina Markovic, PhD, Louise Platt, RDH, BSDH, MHPE, Deborah Polk, PhD, and Zsuzsa Horvath, PhD (Department of Dental Public Health)

References

2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIH, Office of Communications and Public Liaison. Clear Communication. http://www.nih.gov/publicatio n valves have been challenging and current educational resources are limited. 3,4
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Implementation

- Projected Production Timeline
  - Pre-production May-June, 2016
  - Filming Videos 2 & 3 July-August, 2016
  - Filming Video 1 September, 2016
  - Post-production editing October-April, 2017

Measurement of Outcomes

- Class of 2020:
  - Groups A & E: no videos before SP sessions
  - Groups C & D: + videos before select SP sessions
  - Skills assessed using Communication Skills Scoring Sheet (modified from Dow et al.5)

- Classes of 2018 and 2019:
  - Comparison groups, assessed during 3rd yr spring SP session

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Standardized Patient Session</th>
<th>Year (Term)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video 1</td>
<td>“Health History Interview”</td>
<td>Year 1 (Fall)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video 2</td>
<td>“Empathy”</td>
<td>Year 1 (Spring)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video 3</td>
<td>“Mistake and Apology”</td>
<td>Year 3 (Spring)</td>
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Full implementation with the Class of 2021