

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 communication skills and empathy, such as the Meisner Acting Technique. While such techniques have been approached in medicine to improve patient-provider interactions, we are unaware of integration of acting exercises into dental school curricula.⁵

References

1. Betancourt JR. Cultural competence and medical education: many names, many perspectives, one goal. *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*. 2006; 81(6):499-501
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NIH, Office of Communications and Public Liaison. Clear Communication. <http://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication>
3. Dogra N, Reitmanova S, Carter-Pokras O. Teaching cultural diversity: current status in U.K., U.S., and Canadian medical schools. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2010;25 Suppl 2:S164-8.
4. Lu PY, Tsai JC, Tseng SY. Clinical teachers' perspectives on cultural competence in medical education. *Medical Education*. 2014;48(2):204-14.
5. Dow AW, et al. Using theater to teach clinical empathy: a pilot study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2007;22(8):1114-8.



Students practice "listen and focus" skills through a clapping exercise

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)

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

Video	Standardized Patient Session	Year (Term)
Video 1	"Health History Interview"	Year 1 (Fall)
Video 2	"Empathy"	Year 1 (Spring)
Video 3	"Mistake and Apology"	Year 3 (Spring)

Full implementation with the Class of 2021

Measurement of Outcomes

Class of 2020:

- Groups A & B: **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)

Year 1 Fall	Year 1 Spring	Year 3 Fall (assess skill retention)	Year 3 Spring (final assessment)
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Classes of 2018 and 2019:

- Comparison groups, assessed during 3rd yr spring SP session