

Attitudes on peer evaluation of teaching among academic staff of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

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Introduction

Teaching is a multidimensional task which needs continuous evaluation. Peer evaluation is considered superior to student feedback because peer critique usually encompasses expert subject knowledge and teaching-learning strategies. Though peer evaluation may be subjective, this can be minimized by using a pre-formed protocol for observation. Peer review of teaching promotes continuing professional development of individual teachers and is an integral part of quality assurance. Attitudes of academic staff regarding peer evaluation may contribute significantly to the success of the implementation and optimal outcomes of peer evaluation.

Objectives

To describe the attitudes on peer evaluation of teaching, among academic staff of Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo.

Methods

In this descriptive cross sectional study, a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was sent to all academic staff members with a covering letter. A self-addressed envelope was provided in which the completed questionnaires were returned by volunteering participants. Data was analyzed using SPSS software package using descriptive statistics.

Results

55 academic staff (male: female 1: 1.29) responded. 20%, 38.9%, 30.99% and 9.19% of responses were from preclinical, clinical, paraclinical and other disciplines respectively. Majority of responders were senior lecturers (50.9%). > 63% have served for >10 years. 41.1% have had formal training on and 85% had undergone peer evaluation.

Most agreed/strongly agreed that peer evaluation is important to improve teaching skills (92.7%), has added advantage over student feedback (70.9%), should be used as part of continuing professional development (85.5%) and the faculty needs the establishment of a practical peer review process (74.6%). Most disagreed/strongly disagreed that teaching is a highly personalized trait that cannot be analysed (85.5%), peer evaluation should only be for inexperienced probationary lecturers (92.7%), is too time consuming (72.8%) and can lead to violation of personal teaching style (58.1%) and their own capacity for judgment is better than peer evaluation (74.5%). 73% desired to be peer evaluated at least annually and most (67.9%) wanted multiple teaching activities to be evaluated. There was no specific preference for the seniority of the evaluator. Attitude on including peer evaluation results in promotion process was inconclusive.

Conclusions

Responding academics show an overall positive attitude towards peer evaluation which could facilitate the desired implementation of a more formalized peer evaluation process for enhancing teaching quality. However, current status of peer evaluation and the provision of formal training on peer evaluation are suboptimal and need improvement.