

Invited Article

MEDICAL EDUCATION


Role of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Postgraduate Medical Education

Indika Karunathilake

Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka,

Keywords: problem-based learning (PBL), postgraduate medical education

Abstract

Corresponding Author: Indika Karunathilake, E-mail: <karunathilake@hotmail.com>  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9772-116X>
Received: July 2019, Accepted: July 2019, Published: July 2019
Competing Interests: Authors have declared that no competing interests exist

© Author. This is an open-access article distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are attributed and materials are shared under the same license.



Introduction

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a student-centred teaching method used in many medical schools in Sri Lanka and worldwide [1,2]. This method is used predominantly during the pre-clinical phase of undergraduate medical education [3]. The application of PBL in postgraduate medical education is limited. This article will discuss the potential applications of PBL in postgraduate medical education (PGME).

What is PBL?

Barrows, who introduced PBL into medical education defined it as a “A learning method based on the principle of using problems as a starting point for the acquisition and integration of new knowledge” [4]

In this approach, a clinical problem is given to a small group of students to discuss over several sessions. Analysing the problem helps to identify knowledge gaps and acts as a stimulant to explore, not only the basic scientific and clinical facts, but also social, psychological, ethical and professional issues and how these aspects are interconnected [3].

Pioneering this approach, McMaster University describes PBL as “a pedagogical approach, which uses cases, and problems as the starting point for acquiring the desired learning objectives” [5].

History of PBL

The philosophical roots of PBL go back to the era of Socrates, who used problems with his students to help them to explore “their assumptions, their values and the inadequacies of their proffered solutions”. Similarly, Aristotle suggested “students begin problem-solving by determining both their perceptions and beliefs”. This approach is in-