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A qualitative exploration of learning to break bad news among medical students in university of cyberjaya
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Abstract

Delivering or “breaking” bad news is an essential skill for all doctors. Effective delivery of bad news appeases otherwise disgruntled patients thus reducing complaints and lawsuits. There is no better place to start training doctors to break bad news than in medical schools themselves. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of guidance on how best to do it. The aim of this study is to explore the training of breaking bad news in University of Cyberjaya (UoC) from the students’ perspective. Methods: A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted from August 2019 to February 2020 involving Year 4 medical undergraduate students from the University of Cyberjaya. Data collection was done through Focus Groups Discussions (FGD). Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, converted into texts and analysed. Thematic analysis looking at overarching themes, themes and subthemes was performed with the aid of a QDA Miner Lite. All students interviewed have had some exposure to breaking bad news, either in the form of formal teaching or exposure during clinical attachments. Those who received formal teaching were introduced to the SPIKES protocol and generally reported positively about it. The method of assessment of breaking bad news at the University of Cyberjaya is through Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). Among barriers to breaking bad news are lack of knowledge, lack of exposure as well as unprofessional attitudes. However, the students believed if these issues are addressed through training, they can be turned into enablers of breaking bad news. Some suggestions for the training of breaking bad news were also given. Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that training in breaking bad news is integrated into the medical undergraduates’ curriculum. A spiral design beginning from the early years of medical school and a standardized and structured module should be developed and taught. However, more research is needed in this field to facilitate medical educationists to produce a robust and effective module. © 2020, Advanced Scientific Research. All rights reserved.

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Communication; Curriculum Development; Delivering Bad News; Medical Education

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