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Reflective Verbal Feedback: Substrate for Self Reflection

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Abstract:

Students at UNM School of Medicine report the value of feedback from both faculty and standardized patients. In fact, this is something that they crave. Jack Ende’s seminal article on Feedback in Clinical Medical Education (JAMA, Aug 12, 1983-Vol 250, No.6 pp 777-781) supports this perception. He notes that, “without feedback the sense of being adrift in a strange environment is amplified.” He further discusses the value of reflective feedback: that it is formative, “neutral and composed of verbs and nouns. It is an integral part of the learning process,” a compass, which helps the student navigate through the maze of expectations during their medical school career.

UNM has instituted formal feedback for medical students from both faculty and standardized patients following designated clinical practice exams. The feedback agenda differs between standardized patients and faculty. However, both are based on direct, behavioral observations and are structured in an “I” statement format. Standardized patients focus on feelings and faculty focus on communication and clinical skills behaviors. These both involve the reflective process in which the observer acts as a mirror (reflects back) to the student so that they may see themselves. The method is constructive and descriptive, not evaluative. However, by uniting around the common goal of improving clinical interactions, the observer can promote conscious awareness of behaviors in the student, self-reflection, as a means to engender behavior change. As Ende noted, feedback is the method; improved clinical interaction is the goal.

The workshop will describe the context of feedback including the environment of medical education and pertinent literature. We will discuss the method we’ve designed at UNM for training faculty and standardized patients. We will view short video clips of feedback sessions offered by both faculty and standardized patients to illustrate learning points. We will then break into small groups to practice developing and offering feedback to medical students based on the “I” statement format and role play scenarios. The experience of formulating feedback and also receiving feedback from the group will anchor the concepts of reflective feedback for implementation on return to the attendee’s respective programs.