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Incorporating a Flipped Classroom in a Medical Spanish Course
Designed with Role-Playing Experiential Learning

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**INTRODUCTION**

Many health professions education programs have incorporated Spanish language training in their curriculum to address the needs of a growing Spanish speaking patient population with limited English proficiency (LEP). In 2010, the University of New Mexico, Division of Physical Therapy began to offer an elective Medical Spanish Course followed by an immersive service learning trip to Guatemala.

Historically, the course was designed using a traditional lecture format, followed by occasional conversation labs. In 2018 and 2019, the curriculum was progressively modified into a flipped classroom with physical therapy-specific experiential learning labs. Additionally, to address the diverse Spanish proficiency levels in the class, students were homogeneously paired by ability, such that advanced and beginner students worked together and intermediate level students were heterogeneously paired during the lab activities. This was done to facilitate cooperative learning amongst students with a wide range of proficiency levels.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Design an active and supportive experiential learning environment that better integrates the physical therapy-specific curriculum into the Medical Spanish Course.
- Increase opportunities for students to apply and practice speaking Spanish within the context of simulated physical therapy-specific interactions.
- Strategically pair students during lab to facilitate and promote cooperative learning amongst students with various proficiency levels.
- Improve student satisfaction of the Medical Spanish Course.

**METHODS**

In 2017, fourteen DPT students enrolled in the course, which was taught using a traditional lecture-based framework with occasional labs that focused on patient education with the use of reference handouts. In 2019, thirteen DPT students enrolled in the Medical Spanish Course. In 2018 and 2019, the curriculum was progressively modified to incorporate a flipped classroom with physical therapy-specific role-playing experiential labs. Lab topics included the subjective examination and components of the physical examination, with emphasis on manual muscle testing, range of motion, sensory testing and balance testing. Intervention labs covered gait training, exercise instruction and balance training. At the end of each course, a Summative Course Review Session was administered to determine student satisfaction and preferences.

**RESULTS**

Thirteen of 14 students completed the course evaluations in 2017 and 11 of 13 students completed the course evaluations in 2019.

**DISCUSSION**

A total of 27 second year DPT students enrolled in the Medical Spanish Course in 2017 and 2019. There was a significant improvement in student satisfaction with the implementation of a flipped format with clinically relevant experiential learning labs. The majority of students (eight) described the flipped format course as “excellent” with two ratings of “good.” This was significantly better than the ratings for the traditional lecture-based course. Improvements were noted in the course evaluation statement: “The course facilitated my skill development” with eight out of ten respondents strongly agreeing with the statement for the flipped course.

Student comments also reflected an appreciation for the flipped classroom format and the strategic homogenous/heterogeneous lab pairings. Some examples of comments included:

- “The flipped style classrooms were great, I had a lot of fun with all of the activities and I loved that she was able to make it work with all levels of Spanish speakers in the class.”
- “Flipped format of content with emphasis on application and practice with supervision in the class [helped my learning].”
- “Good correlation of content between learning some core concepts of Spanish and applying it to PT [helped my learning].”

**NEXT STEPS**

- Implement a pre- and post-Spanish proficiency test to track student learning.
- Thread medical Spanish curriculum throughout the physical therapy program and anchor it with medical Spanish classes at the beginning of the 1st year and the end of the 2nd year.
- Make the Medical Spanish Course a requirement (credit/no credit) in the UNM Physical Therapy Program.
- Assess and categorize students’ proficiency levels prior to their final three clinical rotations to provide guidance related to:
  - Readiness to independently and safely work with patients who are LEP.
  - Provide safe strategies and expectations for students who are not proficient enough to work independently with patients who are LEP.

**REFERENCES**