ENT undergraduate teaching: what is the best approach?

Roderick M and Vayalapa S. *University of Birmingham Medical School, Birmingham, UK.*

Background

- A recent systematic review of ENT undergraduate education highlighted the need for further development of the curriculum across the UK.¹
- Given how often ENT problems are encountered in other specialties, it is important for newly qualified doctors to have a thorough understanding of ENT conditions. Despite this, nearly a third of UK medical schools do not offer a formal ENT placement.²
- Here we discuss the results of an interactive small group teaching session as a method to improve medical students' ENT knowledge.

Methods

- An interactive teaching event was organised for 90 clinical students (4th and 5th years) by the medical school's ENT society.
- There were six stations in total, each lasting 20 minutes, taught by junior doctors.
- Topics covered were: epistaxis, sore throat, vertigo/tinnitus, otoscopy, hearing loss, and otalgia/otorrhoea.
- Students completed pre and post-session feedback forms, ranking their knowledge of each topic on a scale of 1-10.
- Students also reported on how well they thought ENT is represented in the undergraduate curriculum and their opinions on how ENT teaching can be improved.

Results

- Improvements were seen in all topic areas, but particularly for epistaxis and vertigo/tinnitus (Table 1).
- Importantly, confidence in managing common ENT conditions as a foundation doctor rose from 4.4 to 6.9.
- Otoscopy saw a more modest rise in knowledge score (1.8).

Topic	Pre	Post	Net Improvement
Epistaxis	5.7	8.4	2.7
Sore Throat	5.3	7.4	2.1
Vertigo/Tinnitus	4.7	7.1	2.4
Otoscopy	6.1	7.9	1.8
Hearing Loss	4.9	7.2	2.3
Otalgia/Otorrhoea	5.1	7.1	2.0
FY Confidence	4.4	6.9	2.5

Table 1 – Self-reported knowledge scores of ENT topics, assessed both before and after the teaching session, ranked on a scale of 1-10.

References

1. Ferguson GR, Bacila IA, Swamy M. Does current provision of undergraduate education prepare UK medical students in ENT? A systematic literature review. *BMJ Open* 2016; 6: e010054.
2. Khan MM, Saeed SR. Provision of undergraduate otorhinolaryngology teaching within General Medical Council approved UK medical schools: what is current practice? *The Journal of Laryngology & Otology* 2012; 126:340–344.

- Sixty-four percent of students thought that ENT is poorly represented in the undergraduate curriculum (Figure 1).
- There were a variety of suggestions on how to improve undergraduate ENT teaching (Figure 2). The most popular being: more small group teaching, longer ENT clinical rotation, and more formal ENT teaching (e.g. lectures).

Figure 1 – Students' feedback on how well they think ENT is represented in the undergraduate curriculum.

Conclusion

- ENT is perceived to be poorly represented in the medical school curriculum.
- Interactive small group teaching provides an effective and concise way to help deliver ENT undergraduate teaching and prepare students for managing common ENT conditions.
- Due to the time constraints of the tutors, the strategy to improving undergraduate ENT teaching should incorporate more lecture-based teaching and clinical exposure, alongside interactive small group sessions.

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Figure 2 – Students' feedback on how to improve the ENT undergraduate curriculum.