

Assessment in Problem-based Learning: The Role of the Tutor

A E Dodds,**MA (Melb)*, R H Osmond,***BA Hons (Melb)***, S L Elliott,****MD, MBBS (Melb), FRACP*

Abstract

Introduction: Problem-based learning (PBL) in medicine emphasises the tutor's role in facilitating collaborative and integrated learning. While it is widely recognised that tutors come to know their students, they traditionally play little part in the formal assessment process. We introduced tutor assessment into a problem-based medical curriculum and examined the patterns of tutor marks in four subjects, in terms of within semester consistency and their relation to other forms of assessment in the course. **Materials and Method:** Seventy-four tutors assessed 187 students twice (formative assessment in mid-semester, summative assessment at the end of semester) in each semester, using an assessment tool that focussed on communication and learning skills. Tutor marks were examined using correlations, cluster analysis and chi-square coefficients. **Results:** There were consistent trends in the patterns of cluster membership for pairs of marks in high, average and low clusters from mid-semester formative to end-of-semester summative assessment. Cluster membership for pairs of marks was predominantly consistent. Most movement was from lower to higher clusters over the two assessments, reflecting student improvement after tutors' feedback and tutor responsiveness to feedback to them. There was little variance in the marks of different tutors. Tutor marks correlated moderately and significantly with other forms of assessment in each subject. **Conclusion:** Tutor marks contribute useful, distinctive dimensions to assessment in a problem-based medical curriculum.

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* Senior Lecturer in Medical Education

** Graduate Research Assistant

*** Director

Faculty Education Unit

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Address for Reprints: Agnes Dodds, Faculty Education Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Victoria, 3010, Australia.

E-mail: agnesed@unimelb.edu.au.