

WRITING IN MEDICAL EDUCATION: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Emily Pye, *Applied Health Services Research*,
Diana L. Gustafson, *Community Health and Humanities*

ABSTRACT: Oral Presentation

- Purpose:** LCME requires that faculties of medicine include specific instruction in written communication skills. This MESC-funded case study explored medical students' experiences with developing writing competencies. This presentation will report the findings of a survey of medical students that examined the relationship among students' 1) self-reported writing competence, 2) self-regulated learning strategies, and 3) attitudes towards writing.
- Methods:** An online survey was distributed in the fall and winter semester to 320 medical students enrolled in all four years of undergraduate medical education at Memorial University. The four-part survey was constructed using SurveyMonkey, and included sections on writing competence, self-regulated learning strategies (adapted from a tool created by Purdie and Hattie (1996), attitudes towards writing, demographics, and an open-ended question. Recruitment e-mails were sent out a week before and after the 2-minute group information session to selected classes. Data were imported into SPSS and preliminary analyses were run using frequency analyses.
- Results:** The sample (N = 30) consisted of first year (n = 15) and second year (n = 15) students, and third year (n = 0). Fourth year students will be recruited in March. The majority of students rank their competence as either good (33%), very good (57%), or excellent (7%). Despite this high perception of writing competence, some questioned if their skill level was where it ought to be. Participants indicated that they have not received writing instruction in medical education (63%) or valuable feedback on their writing (60%), some characterizing it as vague and unclear. The students reported using the self-regulated learning strategies at varying degrees, but the most popular strategies were reviewing notes while studying (90%) and memorizing information (93%). Despite rating their writing ability as relatively good, text-based responses revealed that some students felt that they were not experienced with writing in medicine. Many (67%) saw the value of writing in medical education and expressed interest in attending workshops that could improve their writing (43%).
- Conclusion:** Student perspectives may inform curricular change, specifically the need to make written communication skills explicit in medical education. The students' interest in improving their writing skills and their use of the self-regulated learning strategies suggests that workshops to improve discipline-specific writing skills may be welcomed by students. More clear and consistent feedback from teaching faculty is also recommended. The next step is to conduct interviews with physicians to gain further insight on how medical professionals further along in their careers perceive their writing ability and their attitudes towards writing in medical education.