

WRITING IN MEDICAL EDUCATION: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: Oral Presentation (10:30 a.m.)

- Purpose:** The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) requires that faculties of medicine include specific instruction in written communication skills. This case study, funded by the Medical Education Scholarship Centre, explored medical students' experiences with developing writing competencies. This presentation will report the findings of a survey of medical students that examined the relationship between students' 1) writing self-efficacy, 2) self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies, and 3) attitudes towards writing.
- Methods:** An online survey was distributed in the fall and winter semester to 320 medical students enrolled in undergraduate medical education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The four-part survey was constructed using SurveyMonkey and included sections on writing self-efficacy, SRL strategy-use (adapted from a tool created by Purdie and Hattie (1996)), and attitudes towards writing. Recruitment e-mails were sent out a week before and after the 2-minute group information session to selected classes. Data was imported into SPSS and analyzed using descriptive and inferential analyses.
- Results:** The sample (n=53) consisted of first (n=15), second (n=19), and fourth year (n=19) students. Students ranked their writing competence and SRL strategy use high, yet reported low levels of feedback and writing instruction received from their medical instructors. The use of SRL strategies was positively correlated with perceived writing competence. Students appeared to be divided on the importance of writing in medical education. Some were interested in improving their writing and suggested creating writing resources to understand what is expected of their writing. In contrast, other students believed class time devoted to writing activities was wasteful when there could be more time devoted to "medical" content, discounting writing as a valuable educational tool in medicine.
- Conclusion:** Student perspectives may inform curricular change, specifically the need to make written communication skills explicit in medical education. The results suggest that workshops to improve discipline-specific writing skills may be welcomed by students. Writing instruction should incorporate context so students understand why effective writing skills are important in clinical practice. More clear and consistent feedback from teaching faculty is also recommended.