

Anatomical sketching and education: The next steps

Sir,

Noorafshan *et al.* have reported an insightful account into their experience of using simultaneous anatomical sketching as a “learning by doing” method of teaching human anatomy.^[1] As the authors state, too much medical education is a passive experience and anything that can help students take an active part in the learning experience is bound to be a good thing. The authors have gone some way toward evaluating their pedagogical innovation – but they still have some way to go before they can definitely state that this is an effective pedagogy. They have certainly demonstrated feasibility and students broadly like and enjoy the approach.

However, there are further evaluation steps that should now be taken. First of all they should consider finding out what effect this new innovation has on the anatomical knowledge of the students. A controlled trial may be necessary in this regard. Second, an effective pedagogy will have a positive effect on skills as well as knowledge. This new pedagogy would ideally have an effect on skills. Also, yet this might be difficult to evaluate in students who are in a traditional curriculum where they learn anatomy first in their preclinical years and then learn the application of anatomy in the various clinical specialties subsequently. This is really an argument for integration of the curriculum – whereby students learn preclinical and clinical knowledge and skills together and at the same time learn how to integrate these. In this way, the authors would find out if their innovation had an effect on clinical examination skills. Third and last it would also be interesting to conduct a cost analysis of their approach – to see if in fact they had discovered a low cost and yet highly effective method of learning anatomy.^[2]

This would then certainly be worthwhile rolling out in other institutions.

Yours Sincerely,`

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