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Research

Development of reflective thinking in pharmacy students to improve their communication with patients through a process of role-playing, video reviews, and transcript creation ☆

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Abstract

Objective: To assess the educational effectiveness of a phased educational program consisting of role-playing with simulated patients, video-based reviews of the role-playing, and creating the transcripts of the video, we analyzed how each stage of the process affected pharmacy students' awareness of their own communication skills.

Methods: Fourth-year pharmacy students ($n = 158$) who received their preliminary education in 2010 produced written assessment portfolios of their role play performance after (1) role-playing with simulated patients including feedback, (2) reviewing videos of the role-playing, and (3) creating transcripts of the videos. The statements in the students' portfolios were then analyzed to assess the extent of their self-reflection. A questionnaire examining the utility of each stage was also conducted among the students.

Results: The 4665 statements extracted from the portfolios were categorized into four levels according to the depth of reflection. Reflection levels 3 and 4 (the deepest reflection levels) displayed higher frequencies during the transcription stage than during the other stages, i.e., transcription made the students more self-reflective about their communication skills.

Practical implications: Learning through a three-step process of role-playing, video reviews, and transcription facilitates the acquisition of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. By reviewing transcripts of their own conversations, the students came to realize which of their communication skills needed improving. Therefore, this method is considered to be useful for communication skills training.

Keywords: Reflection; Transcript; Communication training; Pharmacy student; Metacognitive ability

Introduction

Clinical pharmacy education programs that enable pharmacists to support pharmacotherapy by gaining an understanding of patients' situations are required to enrich the pharmacy education provided in Japan. As pharmacists' attitudes towards patients are crucial to ensuring that patients follow drug treatment schedules, both the contents of communication training programs aimed at teaching pharmacy students how to approach patients and the methods used to deliver them are being examined in pharmaceutical colleges nationwide. When communicating with patients, pharmacists need to be able to identify any problem that the patients might have with the prescribed pharmacotherapy and discuss these difficulties in an easy-to-understand manner. During such conversations, it is important for the pharmacist to gain the trust of the patient, and pharmacists must always

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be aware of the influence they can have on patients. In 2006, Japanese pharmacy schools changed from a four-year education program to a six-year program, after which the students receive five months of clinical training. Prior to this, pharmacy students take an objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) that assesses whether they possess sufficient clinical competence to allow them to participate in the clinical training. Given the importance of the pharmacist–patient relationship, it has been proposed that simulated patients should be used to help pharmacy students learn how to communicate with patients. Barrows[1] introduced role-playing with simulated patients into medical education, and it is now utilized in medical and pharmacy schools around the world.[2,3] Such role-playing training gives students an opportunity to think about how they can best understand their patients. In order to educate students using simulated patients more effectively, the scenario and feedback method should be optimized. One method of delivering feedback is to record the role-playing on video and then have a faculty member watch the video with the student and advise them. This is an effective way of getting students to reflect on their conversations with simulated patients. However, because of the large number of students, it is often difficult for faculty members to advise every student. Therefore, it is necessary for students to be able to reflect on their own performances.

Miyata et al.,[4] had medical students look back on their clinical training using the significant event analysis (SEA) technique. As a result, the students were able to achieve deep reflection, leading to changes in their behavior. It is important that students learn how to reflect productively on their experiences. Carr and Carmody[5] suggested that having medical students write about and reflect on their behavior in clinical practice with the help of a facilitator helps them to identify weaknesses in their communication skills and medical knowledge, foster clinical insight, and improve their ability to self-assess, all of which are linked to the development of professional competence. As for communication training in present-day pharmacy education, pharmacy students perform role-playing with simulated patients in order to learn how to communicate with patients in clinical settings. Learning methods that not only increase students' experience but also encourage them to reflect on their performance are required to enable pharmacy students to become aware of the way they interact with patients and adapt their behavior accordingly.

In this paper, we examine the effects of our three-stage training program, that consisted of role-playing with simulated patients, reviewing a video of the role-playing, and creating a transcript of the role-playing, on the quality of pharmacy students' reflections on their ability to communicate with patients.

Methods

Since 2009, the fourth-year preliminary education students at our university have taken part in a role-playing program in which they interact with simulated patients. In this novel communication training program, the role-playing is filmed. The participants subsequently review the role-playing on video and then transcribe the videos in order to promote self-reflection on their communication skills in a methodical, phased way. The program is aimed at students that will soon begin advanced pharmacy practice.

Participants and period of study

This study took place with 186 fourth-year undergraduate pharmacy students who attended our university between September and November 2010 after approval had been obtained from our university ethics committee.

Communication training program

The details of the experimental communication training program are described below (Fig. 1).

Simulated patients and role-playing

Student pairs were randomly formed. One student in each pair engaged in role-playing with a simulated patient, while the other student observed the role-playing and evaluated the first student's performance. The students alternated between the roles of the pharmacist and the observer, and two patient settings were employed. The role-playing situations involved patients who wanted to obtain their prescriptions at a community pharmacy. The students were given a ten-minute time limit to gather the required information from the patient and provide appropriate advice on how the prescribed drug should be used. After the role-playing had ended, the student that had played the role of the pharmacist received feedback from both the simulated patient and the student observer. The simulated patients were volunteers recruited from citizens' lectures held at Meijo University. They received training beforehand.

The sessions were conducted in groups in a private room. Each session was recorded using a video camera attached to the ceiling and out of the role-playing student's line of vision.

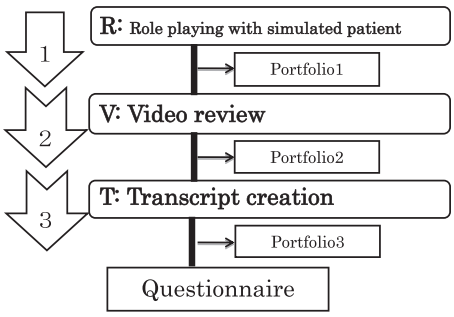

Fig. 1. Three-stage process of the phased role-playing program.