



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Eight years of PBL peer-tutors experience at the Universidad Austral of Chile's Medical School

Alejandra Vidal<sup>a,\*</sup>, Ricardo Castillo<sup>b</sup>, Jorge Gómez<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Medical School, Faculty of Medicine, Austral University of Chile, Valdivia, Chile

<sup>b</sup> Health Sciences Education Office, Faculty of Medicine, Austral University of Chile, Valdivia, Chile

<sup>c</sup> Public Health Institute, Faculty of Medicine, Austral University of Chile, Valdivia, Chile

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### KEYWORDS

Peer-tutors;  
Problem-based  
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### Abstract

**Background:** The great difficulty in implementing problem-based learning (PBL) in the Universidad Austral Medical School, Chile, was due to inadequate number of teachers wishing to become tutors in this topic. As a result of this, a PBL Peer-Tutoring Program was developed.

**Objective:** To analyze, the peer-tutors' experience in this program between 2007 and 2014.

**Method:** A qualitative, descriptive and exploratory was conducted using an intrinsic case study of the experience of peer-tutor. The techniques and tools used were a questionnaire with its survey and two focus groups with the same thematic script. A Likert scale was used to assess tutor perceptions on the training received. Performance and personal achievements was used in the survey, and a thematic analysis was carried out on all the notes from the focus groups.

**Results:** A total of 95 students were trained as peer-tutor between 2007 and 2014, of which 85 of them (89.5%) responded to the questionnaire. The results showed that 84.7% of the tutors agreed on the training received, and 84.4% showed total agreement with their performance perception. The personal achievement item showed the highest responses (89.9%) for total agreement. The focus group highlighted that being a tutor is a great contribution to their personal and professional development.

**Conclusions:** Peer-tutoring in PBL promotes the early acquisition and practice of the skills described in the admission profiles of the medical student, using their own self-learning skills, effective communication, and the motivation to teach.

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\* Corresponding author at: Escuela de Medicina, Facultad de Medicina, Campus Isla Teja, Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia, Chile.  
E-mail address: [avidal@uach.cl](mailto:avidal@uach.cl) (A. Vidal).

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## PALABRAS CLAVE

Tutores por pares;  
Aprendizaje basado  
en problemas;  
Educación médica

## Ocho años de experiencia de tutores pares en ABP, en una Escuela de Medicina chilena

### Resumen

**Introducción:** La gran dificultad para implementar el ABP en la Escuela de Medicina de la Universidad Austral de Chile, fue el número insuficiente de profesores dispuestos a ser tutores de ABP. Para subsanar lo anterior, se diseñó un programa por tutorías de pares usando estudiantes de cursos superiores para aplicar la metodología de ABP.

**Objetivo:** Analizar la experiencia de los tutores por pares en este programa, entre los años 2007 y 2014.

**Método:** Estudio cualitativo, descriptivo y exploratorio. Corresponde a un estudio de caso intrínseco de las experiencias de tutores por pares. Las técnicas e instrumentos utilizados fueron un cuestionario con su encuesta y dos grupos focales con el mismo guion temático. Para la encuesta, se utilizó una escala Likert para evaluar las percepciones de los tutores respecto de la formación recibida, sus logros personales y su desempeño. En los grupos focales se realizó un análisis temático de los registros escritos obtenidos por los moderadores.

**Resultados:** Noventa y cinco estudiantes fueron entrenados como tutores por pares entre los años 2007 y 2014, de los cuales un 89.5% respondió la encuesta. Los resultados mostraron que el 84.7% de los tutores estuvo de acuerdo con la capacitación recibida y el 84.4% se mostró totalmente de acuerdo con la percepción de su desempeño. El ítem logro personal mostró las mayores respuestas (89.9%) para el ítem «acuerdo total». Las sesiones de grupo focal mostraron que ser un tutor es un gran aporte al desarrollo personal y profesional de los estudiantes.

**Conclusiones:** La tutoría por pares en ABP promueve en los tutores, la adquisición y práctica temprana de las competencias descritas en el perfil de egreso del estudiante de medicina, utilizar sus propias habilidades de auto-aprendizaje, la comunicación efectiva y la motivación para enseñar.

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## Introduction

Under the scope of the Society of Knowledge in the XXI century, professional trainings started to incorporate concepts such as “student-centered education,” “skills-based training” and “student mobility”, as well as the quality assurance and accreditation of universities.<sup>1,2</sup> In line with the above and in the field of higher education, Chile focuses its efforts to provide the necessary skills to increase global competitiveness. With the establishment of the Quality Assurance System in Higher Education, a new era started where the educational efforts are oriented toward the quality of education and to the student-centered education approach. Thus, Universidad Austral of Chile (UACH) aligns with it by understanding learning as a holistic, permanent, creative and innovative process thus, encouraging teaching and professional development to be centered on quality, pertinence and equity. Education should facilitate people “to learn how to learn”, including the capacity to continue learning throughout life; “to learn how to do”, acquiring the necessary skills to perform in different situations; “to learn how to live together” respecting pluralism, mutual understanding and “to learn how to be”, so as to better develop their own personality in order to act with increasing autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility.

Aligned with the above, the School of Medicine from UACH, proposed a curriculum change in 2004. The new curriculum was meant to be innovative, to develop and

consolidate essential generic and transferable skills for the XXI century medical professionals, to achieve a real coherence between the graduated professional and the one the country needs thus, leaving a rigid curriculum for an open and flexible one to train participative and integrated professionals for inter- and transdisciplinary team work, with a leading attitude to solve the people’s health needs at individual, family and community levels.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, one of the student-centered approaches proposed, was the Problem Based Learning (PBL) methodology starting from the first year of medical studies. This was considered a good educational strategy because it can be used as a general strategy throughout the curriculum of a professional career or to be implemented as a working strategy along a specific course and even as a teaching technique applied for the review of certain course’s learning objectives.<sup>4</sup> It allows both the knowledge acquisition and the development of skills and attitudes.<sup>5</sup> During the students’ interaction process, learning about a particular subject and the ability to make a diagnosis of their own learning needs is achieved, as well as the understanding of the importance of working collaboratively, to develop skills for the analysis and synthesis of information, as well as the commitment to their own learning process.<sup>6</sup> Working in small groups is a pillar of the student-centered education promoting key skills for future career development, such as “learning how to learn”, teamwork, the use of knowledge in the context of the profession, etc., in addition to

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