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Introduction of Regular Formative Assessment to Enhance Learning for Clinical Students at Muhimbili University College, Tanzania

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Abstract

Objective: To determine if undertaking regular Formative Assessment (FA) in the setting of our medical school enhanced the students' learning experience.

Methods: An FA intervention was designed and implemented with clinical students during their clerkship in the academic year 2003/04. FA was administered as structured verbal comments on daily clinical case presentations. Evaluation of the intervention included pre- and post-surveys exploring the perceptions of students and teachers on the quality of the learning experience. Focus group discussions with students and with teachers were held at the start and conclusion of the intervention to identify strengths and weaknesses of FA.

Findings: All participating teachers perceived that students were interested in learning before the intervention. Teachers who perceived that students achieved the set learning objectives increased from 0% before to 28% after the intervention. Most teachers (71%) and students (86%) perceived FA to enrich students' learning experience. Students appreciated the positive change in teachers' attitudes during the FA intervention. Both students and teachers recommended that FA become a regular and routine activity.

Conclusions: Students and teachers viewed FA as a positive, feasible intervention. They thought it enriched the learning process and recommended it be a routine learning activity.

Keywords: Formative assessment, learning, student-teacher relationship, curriculum Innovation