Feedback in Clinical Medical Education

Feedback occurs when a student is offered insight into what he or she did as well as the consequences of those actions.

Why give feedback?

• It is one of the best ways to inform students about their performance.
• It provides information students can use to make adjustments in achieving their goals and reaching their maximum potential.
• It increases the student’s self-awareness and self-understanding, which will facilitate learning.

Without Feedback

• Mistakes go uncorrected.
• Good performance is not reinforced.
• Clinical competence is achieved empirically or not at all.
• The sense of being adrift in a strange environment is amplified.

Why is feedback not given? (Vanishing Feedback)

• Failure to make firsthand observations of performance.
• Concern negative feedback will hurt student, damaging student-teacher relationship.
• Affects popularity.

Feedback can be a powerful tool in clinical medical education when used properly.

Feedback is more effective when students know the criteria against which their performances will be measured.

So establish well defined goals and measure student performance against those goals.

Guidelines for Giving Feedback:

• Base on first-hand information (direct observation).
• Descriptive, detailed, nonevaluative, and encouraging language.
• Deal with specific performances, not generalizations.
• Well-timed and expected.
• Consistent.
• Limit to behaviors that are remediable.
• Focus on activities, not individuals.
• Focus on decisions, not decision-makers.
Eliciting Student’s Feedback:
- “How do you think things are going?”
- “How do you think your presentation went?”
- “What aspects do you think were successful?”
- “What aspects need improvement?”

Structuring Feedback:
- Elicit students’ self feedback
- Comment on self feedback
- Pick one area that is strong and one that needs correction
- Give specific examples on which opinion is based
- Agree on an action plan

Examples of Feedback:
- **Judgmental**: “You are disinterested.”
- **Neutral**: “When we discussed your patient you did not participate.”

- **Judgmental**: “You are too shy.”
- **Neutral**: “When you were asked for input you did not speak up.”

- **Vague/Evaluative**: “Your differential was inadequate.”
- **Descriptive/Nonevaluative**: “The differential did not include the possibility of disease X.”

- **Vague/Evaluative**: “You did a great job.”
- **Descriptive/Nonevaluative**: “Your presentation was detailed, inclusive and lead to the appropriate conclusions.”

Bad Feedback Substitutes
- Raised Eyebrows
- Brusque Responses
- Avoidance of Problems

Feedback fails if it leads to anger defensiveness or embarrassment.

**Constructive Feedback** is a combination of positive and negative feedback along with a description of how to improved next time.
Constructive Feedback Provides Students:
- Information on what is done right AND wrong
- Information on why they are doing well or poorly
- Praise for what is done well

When Should Constructive Feedback Be Done?
- **Ideally** with every encounter
- **Realistically** at regular intervals
- **Minimally** at the end of the rotation

Feedback & Problem Situations
- Giving feedback to outstanding student
- Giving feedback to passive student
- Giving feedback to belligerent student
- Giving feedback to poor student
- Giving feedback to aggressive student
- Giving feedback to abusive student
- Giving feedback to lazy student

Feedback and Evaluation
- Mistakenly used interchangeably

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents information</td>
<td>Presents judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formative - part of the learning process</td>
<td>Summative - comes after the fact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help students gauge their levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes</td>
<td>Value statements about students’ levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes</td>
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Feedback Sandwich
- What was done right
- What was done wrong
- How to improve

Feedback . . .
- It’s necessary
- It’s valuable
- It’s not that difficult with practice and planning
- It should be part of every adult educational program