

ENHANCING CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH E-PBL

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BACKGROUND: Exposure to cultural diversity is important in medical education in order to produce global leaders with multicultural sensitivity and communicative competency. E-learning platforms allow learners from different geographic regions and cultures to form learning communities, thus exposing students to a culturally diverse learning environment. This study explores the use of an e-learning platform that allows students and facilitators with different cultural backgrounds to collaborate in PBL centered activities that pertain to communicating bad news. **METHODS:** Four medical students (two from Canada and two from Hong Kong) took part voluntarily. Two one-hour PBL sessions were conducted (in English) on a web-conferencing programme called Adobe Connect Pro. These two sessions were each facilitated by an experienced PBL facilitator from Hong Kong and Canada respectively. An expert in PBL facilitation was also involved in these two sessions, but was not visible to the students. Pre and post tests were conducted to 1) check students’ motivation in learning, 2) test their knowledge about how to communicate bad news to a patient by watching an online video clip, 3) allow students to practice communicating bad news with standardized patients, and 4) allow students to reflect on their performance. Data sources included transcript of the PBL sessions, chat logs, and focus group transcripts. **RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS:** Despite some technical issues such as time delay in the audiovisual signals, students were highly engaged in the PBL discussions. We showed that it was possible to engage students and facilitators with different cultural backgrounds in a common PBL session through the use of technology. In the PBL sessions, students explicitly discussed cultural differences in handling sensitive healthcare issues such as communicating bad news.