

Teaching Medical Ethics: Phramongkutklao College of Medicine's Model

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Background: Third-year (first preclinical year) Royal Thai Army (RTA) medical cadets were exposed to a rural community in a community medicine field activity. The poor, kind rural people gave good conditions for student's professional development and empathy.

Objectives: To report a community medicine field work activity for professional development of the RTA medical school.

Material and Method: Descriptive analysis on two occasions to evaluate the third-year RTA medical cadets' impressions immediately after the community medicine field activity in a rural area in central Thailand and one year later using baseline scores of cadets' impressions against our institute's objectives.

Results: At the end of the field work, 90.9% of the cadets reported they achieved several institute objectives. The four most frequent mentioned were ethical development (70.6%), professionalism (84.3%), human relationship & communication skills (92.2%), and capability to work in the community (64.7%). Furthermore, RTA medical cadets rated the staff as good role models (51%).

Conclusion: The community field work course provided a good environment for the third year medical cadets in building morality and professional development to be good doctors.

Keywords: Medical ethics, Ethical teaching, Community medicine, Moral assessment, Authentic assessment, Professional development, Professionalism

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Curriculum development is an ongoing process globally^(1,2,3,4). Thai medical schools have gradually modified their curricula according to

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international, political and social demands and healthcare reform policy. In 2000, Wanapruk reviewed 13 ethics meetings which were set within 4 years, and found that every Thai medical school teaches medical ethics in some way, but sets from zero to four credit hours⁽⁵⁾. From the 7th Thai

National Medical Consortium Meeting in 2001, it was recommended that medical ethics should be an accountable subject with credit hours to promote student community activities, which is a new direction in Thai medical schools⁽⁶⁾.

Attitude teaching is the most difficult process in medical teaching. Medical ethics involves medical law, patient rights and medical judgment (bioethics). Morals involve individual experiences and mental development, which is internalized or expressed after certain stimuli or stresses. Nowadays, medical students pay little attention to ethics and the same or worse is true for the new graduate being let loose on the public⁽⁷⁾.

Phramongkutklao College of Medicine is the only Armed Forces Medical School in Thailand. It was established in 1968 by the order of His Majesty, the King of Thailand. 6 year medical curriculum provides 32 to 65 medical cadets a year for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Thai society. The aim of our medical teaching is to improve student's cognitive knowledge, professional skills with the abilities to acquire knowledge for life-long learning, keep up-to-date and solve problems as well as exhibit professionalism and moralism.

"Attitudes are caught not taught." Every country has its own culture and beliefs. How we adjust our teaching environment to promote ethical thinking and professional development are challenging issues. Phramongkutklao College of Medicine's ethics curriculum has been implemented on every occasion from preclinical to clinical years since 1981. "Social, Cultural, Behavioral and Ethical Issues in Medicine" is the designated ethics worth 3 credits. The course uses the following format.

1. Site visit: Orphanage, drug addiction treatment hospital, etc.
2. Lecture: Famous Thai Medical Council members, lawyers, and social activists facilitate discussions.

3. Case study: Small group discussions on several topics such as End of Life Care, conflicts of interest, HIV patients and families and honesty, etc.

4. Field work: Rural area community medicine field work for the third- and fourth-year medical students.

To make these cadets good doctors, ethical and moral issues should also be regularly added in every teaching process. In order to know whether our course suitably provide these issues, we the authors have investigated what the students achieved from the community field work activity.

Material and Method

The present paper presents a field work course for third-year medical students who spent a week in a rural district from 14 to 20 December 2002 as a study model to develop student professionalism and morality.

The students were divided into 4 groups with their own projects. The projects were approved by the group advisors and presented to the class. The questionnaires and educational instruments were revised as instructed by the field experts.

Several activities for the students included

1. Collect basic population data and specific group course database.
2. Set an exhibition course for public education.
3. Conduct a community leader focus group discussion to identify their community health care problems.
4. Conduct a role play on public health education according to each focus group discussion.
5. Summarize and provide feedback to the public and the institute.

Questionnaires concerning the student's impressions against our institute's objectives were filled by the medical cadets immediately and 1-year after the community medicine field activity.

Table 1. Phramongkutkloao College of Medicine's Social, Cultural, Behavioral and Ethical Issues in Medicine subject

Academic year	Site visit	Lecture	Case study
1981	0	5	14
1982	2	10	15
1983	0	8	9
1984	2	8	12
1985	1	9	12
1986	2	6	12
1987	1	10	10

Table 2. The student's impressions against the present institute's objectives (immediately after the field work compared to the second opinion, 1 year later) (N = 56)

Item	Number of students who agreed (%)	
	Immediate (N = 54)	1 year later (N = 51)
1 To possess morality and ethics in the practice of medicine	36 (70.6)	46 (85.2)
2 To have faith and pride in their medical profession	43 (84.3)	37 (68.5)
3 To possess the quality of military leadership	4 (7.8)	30 (55.6)
4 To be observant, thoughtful and enthusiastic in learning To be able to solve problems systematically	22 (43.1)	39 (72.2)
5 To have a positive attitude toward continuing education	3 (5.9)	47 (87.0)
6 To have good human relationships and skills in interpersonal communication and cooperation	47 (92.2)	40 (74.1)
7 Always be an adaptable and adjustable person	20 (39.2)	44 (81.5)
8 To look at and solve problems using a holistic approach	0 (0)	42 (77.8)
9 To be able to evaluate the situations and their own abilities	6 (11.8)	44 (81.5)
10 To be able to perform their duty in any kind of community and situation	33 (64.7)	42 (77.8)
11 To be able to modify and select appropriate technology for preventing and solving health problems	11 (21.6)	38 (70.4)

Results

On the last day in the community, 20th December 2002, all the students wrote their feedback regarding the impressions and experience they gained from the field work. These are categorized

and summarized in Table 2 and compared with our institution's objectives (Appendix 1). Below are some examples of our student feedback:

"In conclusion, I gained a lot from this program including field experience, problem solving ability and ability to work with others. I got new knowledge as well as ethical issues that the staff pointed out all the time..."

"The experience that I obtained will surely remind me what a good doctor is! And I will be back to prove how good a doctor I am..."

"The benefit that I got is the heart of a doctor, some inspiration and loss of some bad habits. I feel more empathy, more patience and more morality..."

"Although, the field work is hard, I earned some good impressions to be a good doctor, to be devoted to the society-especially in the remote communities. They are waiting for doctors to come, to serve and teach them - it is really a good impression..."

From Table 2, 51 medical cadets (90.9%) gave comments on the program. Over 50% of the students rated four out of our institute's eleven objectives. Human relationship development, professionalism and moral development were rated the highest, 92.2%, 84.3%, and 70.6%, respectively. Besides reaching the institute's objectives, 51% of the students commented that the accompanying staff were good models. This is the highest activity that made our staff good models.

The second survey was one year later. The authors used the institute's objectives as a part of the questionnaire for the students to express their impressions at the present time. Surprisingly, good impressions remained, even higher than the first survey, but how long will they last? Will they be good doctors in the future? It is challenging to know.

Discussion

Affective domain teaching can be arranged in many ways; lectures, case discussion, role-playing, and direct exposure to clinical situations by simulated patients or real world conditions. According to Krathwohl et al (1956) there are five levels in the affective domain: Receiving, responding, valuing, organizing and characterizing by value. This field work at least helped the medical cadets to understand the villager's poverty and the hope for better health care. In addition, it would help the students to sense and feel their needs and know the value of poverty and themselves, forming (organizing) a better value in professionalism. The authors hope that these good feelings will leave an impression in their minds and characterize them to be good doctors in the future.

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Appendix I: Phramongkutklo College of Medicine Objectives for Graduates

1. To possess morality and ethics in the practice of medicine.
2. To have faith and pride in their medical profession.
3. To possess the quality of military leadership and knowledge of military rules in order to be able to lead and command a small medical unit.
4. To be observant, thoughtful and enthusiastic in learning, able to solve problems systematically and scientifically and having research potential.
5. To have a positive attitude toward continuing education by emphasizing three important principles; namely: Willingness to learn, ability to learn and responsibility in learning and performing their duties.
6. To have good human relationships and skills in interpersonal communication and cooperation, to be efficient in writing and presenting a report and to be able to teach and transfer medical knowledge and concepts.
7. To be versatile in the medical profession, which means having potential to perform in several roles of a physician such as general practitioner or the ability to perform basic duties efficiently in any other subspecialty; to function as a researcher, scientist or administrator, to have the ability to teach and transfer medical and public health knowledge to medical and paramedical personnel in disease prevention and control, to always be an adaptable and adjustable person.

8. To look at and solve problems using a holistic approach, to clearly understand that causes of medical problems are multifactorial, namely, body, mind, family, society and environment.
9. To be able to evaluate situations using their own abilities.
10. To be able to perform their duty in any kind of community and situation, be it in the city or in the country, at the home station or in the military field with good administration and cost-effectiveness.
11. To be able to modify and select appropriate technology for preventing and solving health problems, to give education, promotion and rehabilitation of health problems to armed forces personnel and their families including appropriate community and family planning.

การสอนจริยธรรม: รูปแบบของวิทยาลัยแพทยศาสตร์พระมงกุฎเกล้า

สุรพล สุรางค์ศรีรัฐ, สุธี พานิชกุล, พจน์ เอ็มพันธ์, งาม รังสินธุ์, มทิรุทธ มุ่งฉิน, ปานจิต ธรรมศรี, พรรณเพ็ญ นาประคิษฐ์, ปณิตดา หัตถโชติ, กิจจา สุวรรณ, วิโรจน์ อาริย์กุล

บทนำ: นักเรียนแพทย์ทหาร (นพท.) ชั้นปีที่สาม วิทยาลัยแพทยศาสตร์พระมงกุฎเกล้า (วพม.) ได้ผ่านการฝึกปฏิบัติงานในชุมชนชนบท เพื่อปลูกฝังจิตสำนึกในความเป็นแพทย์ที่ดี มีคุณธรรมและจริยธรรมให้เกิดขึ้นในใจของ นพท. เหล่านี้

วัตถุประสงค์: เพื่อนำเสนอการเรียนการสอนทางด้านคุณธรรมและจริยธรรมในการออกฝึกภาคสนามวิชาเวชศาสตร์ทหารและชุมชนของ นพท. ชั้นปีที่ 3 วิทยาลัยแพทยศาสตร์พระมงกุฎเกล้า

วัสดุและวิธีการ: เป็นการวิจัยเชิงพรรณนาเพื่อประเมินความประทับใจในด้านจริยธรรม ภายหลังจากการฝึกภาคสนามทันทีและเปรียบเทียบกับ 1 ปีหลังผ่านการฝึกนั้นมาแล้ว

ผลการศึกษา: พบว่าหลังจากการฝึกภาคสนามนั้น นพท. ร้อยละ 90.9 ประเมินว่าสามารถบรรลุวัตถุประสงค์ของ วพม. โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในด้านการพัฒนาทางด้านจริยธรรม (ร้อยละ 70.6) จรรยาบรรณวิชาชีพ (ร้อยละ 84.3) มนุษยสัมพันธ์และการสื่อสาร (ร้อยละ 92.2) รวมทั้งความสามารถในการปฏิบัติงานในชุมชน (ร้อยละ 64.7) นอกจากนี้ นพท. ได้ประเมินว่าอาจารย์เป็นแบบอย่างที่ดีในการปฏิบัติงานในชุมชน (ร้อยละ 51.1)

สรุป: หลักสูตรการฝึกภาคสนามวิชาเวชศาสตร์ชุมชน สามารถสร้างประสบการณ์ที่ดีแก่ นพท. ในการสร้างเสริมจริยธรรมและจรรยาบรรณในวิชาชีพแพทย์ต่อไป
