

The Experience of Medical Students Classified as Unsatisfactory at Finals



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Overview

- Leicester Course
- Methodology
- 3 students to illustrate points
- Support
- Feedback
- Barriers to seeking help
- Future work



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Leicester MB ChB



- "As far as the General Medical Council is concerned the training of students at Leicester is a splendid example of how we can be awarded 23 points to be independent of the medical profession"
- ranked in the top ten medical schools in the 2008 Guardian University Guide
- Sir Donald ...
- written ... clinical
- Final Professional Examination
- ... and clinical



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Methods



- Investigate students who struggle
- Interviews and focus groups
 - 7 students who fail FPE + resit
 - Students who fail IPE but pass resit
 - Staff (academics, senior administrators, school tutors)
- Interpretative phenomenological analysis



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'The Seven'



- 6 x 5-year and 1 health science
- Diverse group
 - Age (18 – 38)
 - Demographics
 - Problems



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Student C: Sudden 'problem'



my mood must have been very low ... I just wasn't focussed on it and even when it came to revising for Finals ... I didn't really make any active steps I just sort of sat there with a book in front of me and ...there was no real sort of drive to go and strive



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Student D: system, not me

I mean four, I don't know how many marks I was off... there's not much difference, it doesn't mean that I'm a bad doctor

- A few single module fails that did not lead to QE or resit
 - 'Quite disappointed' but fails only matter if consequences
 - Works hard, not an 'excellent' student, 'just gets on with it'.
- Small difference 'doesn't make her a bad doctor'.

Approach to learning

when you do the individual modules and things and then you forget about them and then you move on and then you do the individual modules again but you kind of don't go back and think about like ... a metabolism problem in the first year could cause a respiratory or whatever problem in the second year when you do the thing so you don't go back and think about it

the integration of things was more important and I would think about integrating it just in the first year even though it ... we weren't taught like that

Exam Technique

- Struggles to interpret questions
- Does not know what is asked of her
- 'Only failed by a few marks'
- Passed 'harder' clinical exam

'System problems'

- Unfairness of her experience = difficult to accept
- Didn't deserve to fail, Worked really hard
- Questioned validity of assessment
- **Poor feedback**
- Critical of teaching –not taught in an integrated fashion but are examined that way – unfair

Student E: Scrapping by

Student E

then they said you'd passed the viva then I thought okay so I've got through that so that's fine ... and I kind of put that behind me ... once I got into Phase Two it was kind of forgotten about really ... I thought oh these written papers I've left them behind now.

Study technique: 'Knew his stuff'

- A-level belief - hard work pays off
- Learning vs. understanding
- Doing what you can to get through
- Moving on / getting through
- Changed nothing, NOT reflecting, learning from mistakes, integrating

*... trying to put everything down on paper to get the marks
... It's an easy thing to say three marks, three points but I think maybe I did have a problem in putting the key points down, so I'd try and put a lot of my knowledge down
... maybe I could have done it in a quicker way*

Attitudes to support?

I wasn't really too sure on [personal tutor] role. Like I didn't know whether it was you know an academic role or whether he was just there to offer you support ... maybe he was there for it but I didn't really take him up on that. ... I didn't really think to seek any help and no help was offered to me either

Feedback

he just looked at the questions I got wrong ... he goes 'there was an ECG question, you didn't pass it, you know you should know that stuff' ... he didn't pick up on the fact that maybe I had written too much for a certain answer ... the feedback was 'you got this question wrong so you need to learn about this'

'cos I was one question off again the medical school just went 'well you'll be okay ... a lot of people have to do the retake' they said 'so you'll be fine' ... but in some senses when they did that I kind of felt reassured that they weren't that worried about me

Barriers to Engaging with Support

I am a very private person, I think even last year I was having problems ... I don't really like talking to other people about my problems. I'd rather talk to people that I know, family members and things

I burnt myself out when it came to the second retake for Finals. ...emotionally I was drained ... I kind of worked myself into the ground I think. So it's important to pace yourself, work throughout the year and not just for the exams ⁽¹⁾

Conclusion

- Great diversity
- Some common themes
- Difficult to access and engage students who are struggling
- Response to failure influences future performance

Future work – a fuller picture

- Focus groups and interviews for other groups
 - those who fail major exams but go on to pass resit
 - 'High fliers'
- Next cohort
- Other medical schools



Any Questions?

