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Practice, Policy & Education

Re: Medical student education in the time of COVID-19: A virtual solution to the introductory radiology elective

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I read with great interest the work by Belfi et al. in which they outline an online alternative for an elective placement in radiology aimed at medical students.¹ I am a UK medical student who has just completed an online radiology elective based in the USA. I have also completed a “Student Selected Component” in radiology at my medical school. This was in person and prior to COVID, and thus lends itself to comparison. In addition, I take an interest in medical education and the specialty of radiology. I draw on these experiences and my examination of relevant academic literature when writing this letter.

I very much value the “flipped-classroom” model¹ Belfi et al. employed - indeed the results of Hew et al. show that the flipped classroom improves student learning in health professional's education.² However, I would be interested to receive clarification regarding the difference between the topics and teaching styles of “asynchronous” teaching compared to the subsequent “synchronous” teaching of Belfi et al.'s elective programme.¹ Hew et al. found that the use of quizzes at the start of face-to-face classes were effective. They provide a possible explanation for this in that the use of quizzes aided student recall of prior knowledge learned.² I am keen to hear the opinion of Belfi et al.¹ regarding the use of questions at the start of each “synchronous” learning session. I would also like to ask for clarification regarding if “asynchronous” teaching sessions can be mapped to the subsequent “synchronous” teaching sessions directly in terms of topics, with the opportunity for students to ask questions about content of the “asynchronous” teaching sessions during the “synchronous” teaching sessions. Persky et al. explain the importance of instructors answering student questions during live teaching in helping students transition from a simpler to more complex understanding of a topic.³ I would be interested in hearing Belfi et al.'s¹ opinion on such a role of the teacher in assisting that development.

Finally, I was very impressed by the positive feedback students gave concerning the elective. I was interested if there was any formal self-evaluation or feedback conducted by the teachers themselves. Harden et al. emphasises the importance of this.⁴ I am keen for Belfi et al.¹ to

express their view regarding the extent to which they feel this would be beneficial for this programme.

In summary, I am very supportive of the “flipped-classroom” model used by Belfi et al.¹ in designing the elective programme and the positive feedback they received is impressive. I would be very interested to hear Belfi et al.'s¹ comments on my requests for clarification regarding certain aspects of their paper and to hear their opinion on my suggestions based on information from current academic literature.

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Jean Henri Nel: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Investigation (literature search); Project administration; Validation; Roles/Writing - original draft; Writing - review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

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