Collaborative competency development in pharmacy undergraduates through Visual Thinking Strategies

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Background

- Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) Housen and Yenawine (1,2)

- Uses visual art and small group teaching to develop **visual literacy** and **transferable skills**

- Medical, pharmacy and nursing students VTS used to develop transferable generic competencies (3,4,5)

- Introduced into part II of our revised BPharm programme in 2016
Aims

• To describe the rationale for the implementation of VTS learning activities in our part II programme.

• To present students’ early perceptions of VTS and its effects
Rationale

- Focus on developing students’ skills and attitudes related to:
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
  - Cultural competence

- To assist students to further develop & apply learning from Clinical & Professional Skills teaching to other areas of BPharm curriculum.
Visual Thinking Strategies

A structured facilitated process

1. What’s going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can you find?
Implementation

• 10 VTS sessions over 2 semesters

• Images used linked to module & course activities around culture, communication, reflective practice and wellbeing

• Images and activities aligned with patient-centred communication frameworks used by students within practice labs, workshop sessions and assessments
Refinements

• Warm up exercises
  Help students adjust to the different environment/change of pace and the contribution expectations.

• Reduced group size
  <15 students = increased opportunity to experience collaboration.

• Collaborative image selection.
  Students democratically decide as a group from 3-4 purposively chosen images by tutor.
## Results

98/174 responses
(response rate 56%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item (Perceived effect of attending the Learn to See sessions)</th>
<th>Agreed (n=98)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My active listening skills improved</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>My concise oral summary skills improved</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>My ability to collaborate and work in a team improved</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<td>My ability to consider different ideas &amp; contrary opinions with a more open attitude improved</td>
<td>94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>My cultural competencies improved</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I mostly listened in Learn to See sessions</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I spoke in the Learn to See sessions.</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn to See sessions should remain part of the BPharm programme.</td>
<td>86%</td>
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</table>
“Open-mindedness and a willingness to contribute as part of a team.”

“Sometimes I would feel like my point of view didn't really mean much and so wouldn't say it. However through continuous sessions I have gained more confidence in saying my opinion.”
“When I was following a speech language therapist at the hospital, I thought about the different perspectives they may have on medications as opposed to what pharmacists see.”

“In the first semester I hated Learn to See and thought that what people were saying was ridiculous. I now realise that everyone does have a valid point, and that there is a purpose in these exercises. Generally I just really enjoy these sessions.”
Incorporating VTS into our curriculum appears to have assisted students to develop skills, self-knowledge and attitudes which link to elements of:

- University of Auckland BPharm Graduate Attribute Profile
- PCNZ competence standards of Professionalism in Pharmacy & Communication and Collaboration
- NZ Pharmacy Action Plan 2016-20 and the 2016 NZ Health Strategy
- 8 Star Pharmacist (WHO/FIP) around a One-Team approach
Key Conclusions

VTS provides an environment which offers many opportunities for students to:

• Experience the benefits of collaborative practice

• Develop key skills and attitudes for successful collaboration such as:
  – Communication competencies
  – Open-minded attitudes
  – Tolerance of ambiguity
Future Directions

• A comprehensive evaluation plan to further understand:
  – Critical features of the VTS method in our programme
  – Implications for teaching such as extent of transfer of VTS ‘thinking & practices’ to other learning domains and how to further enhance this transference.

• Strengthening and making the links from VTS to communication frameworks and interprofessional learning experiences more visible to students
Key references

4. Jasani SK, Saks NS. Utilizing visual art to enhance the clinical observation skills of medical students. Med Teach 35(7), 2013
5. Ryan K, Waebcr C, McCarthy S, O’Leary E. Using art and poetry to develop observation and thinking skills in undergraduate pharmacy students. School of Pharmacy, University College Cork, Poster The European Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning 2015

Further information on VTS: www.vtshome.org We can be contacted via l.petersen@auckland.ac.nz and t.aspden@auckland.ac.nz