e-ISSN: 0975-1556, p-ISSN:2820-2643

Available online on www.ijpcr.com

International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research 2023; 15 (12); 431-437

Original Research Article

Assessing the Effectiveness of Various Training Methods for Developing Basic Surgical Skills in Medical Students: A Retrospective Study

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Received: 25-09-2023 / Revised: 28-10-2023 / Accepted: 30-11-2023
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Conflict of interest: Nil

Abstract:

Background: Training in surgical skills is an important component of medical education, as it affects the future competency and safety of those working in the healthcare industry. The purpose of this retrospective study is to evaluate the efficacy of various training techniques for establishing basic surgical skills in medical students and their consequences for patient outcomes.

Methods: Three types of surgical skills education were compared using data from 300 medical students who had finished training: traditional classroom instruction, computer-based simulation, and on-the-job mentoring. Patient outcomes were analysed, including things like surgical complication rates, hospital lengths of stay, and rates of hospital readmission. Possible confounding factors were accounted for in the multivariate regression analysis.

Results: Compared to simulation-based (10.8%), apprenticeship-based (7.5%), and apprenticeship-based training (8.1%), the rate of surgical complications (16.5%), hospital stays (4.9 days), and readmission rates (9.4%) were all higher in the didactic lecture group. These results were corroborated by a multivariate regression analysis, which showed that classroom instruction was independently associated with an increased risk of complications (p=0.03), longer hospital stays (p=0.02), and higher readmission rates (p=0.03). Hospital stays were shorter with simulation-based training, although more serious problems occurred less frequently with apprenticeship-based instruction.

Conclusion: The results advise rethinking medical education's didactic approach. Experience-based instruction can improve medical students' surgical skills and patient safety. This study enhances medical education and patient care discussions. More study is needed to adapt training and courses to healthcare demands.

Keywords: Apprenticeship-based training, Didactic lecture-based training, Medical education, patient outcomes, Simulation-based training, surgical complications.

Introduction

Surgical skills training is an integral part of medical school because it equips future doctors with the knowledge and experience, they need to provide quality care to their patients [1]. Medical students today need to be equipped with not just a thorough theoretical knowledge of the human body and all its nuances but also the technical proficiency to conduct a wide range of surgical and procedural operations [2]. Learning these abilities is crucial not only for the student's success but also for the well-being of the patients they will one day care for. Given this, we conducted retrospective research on the efficacy of different approaches to teaching surgical fundamentals to medical students.

Objective

- To evaluate and contrast the efficacy of current approaches used in medical education to teaching fundamental surgical skills.
- To examine how surgical safety and postoperative problems are affected by medical students' exposure to surgical skills training.
- To enhance the standard of medical education and patient care by providing helpful information that may be used to improve surgical skills training.

The importance of this research rests in the fact that it may help fill important voids in medical education. However, the training methods and curriculum that medical students encounter have progressed at a different pace than the field of surgery, which advances in surgical techniques and

technology have reshaped [4]. It is vital to modify and improve the training methods employed in medical education to ensure that future healthcare workers are well-prepared and able to fulfil the ever-growing patient care needs. As a means of bettering medical education and patient safety, we strive to evaluate the efficacy of different training methods better to understand the advantages and disadvantages of these approaches.

In addition, the competency and expertise of the medical staff making treatment decisions have a direct bearing on the results for their patients. We hope that this research will stimulate a broader discussion regarding the role of medical education in achieving the highest quality of care for patients.

Potentially safer procedures and improved patient outcomes could result from enhanced training approaches for medical students. The importance of this study cannot be emphasised in a healthcare system where patient safety is of utmost importance.

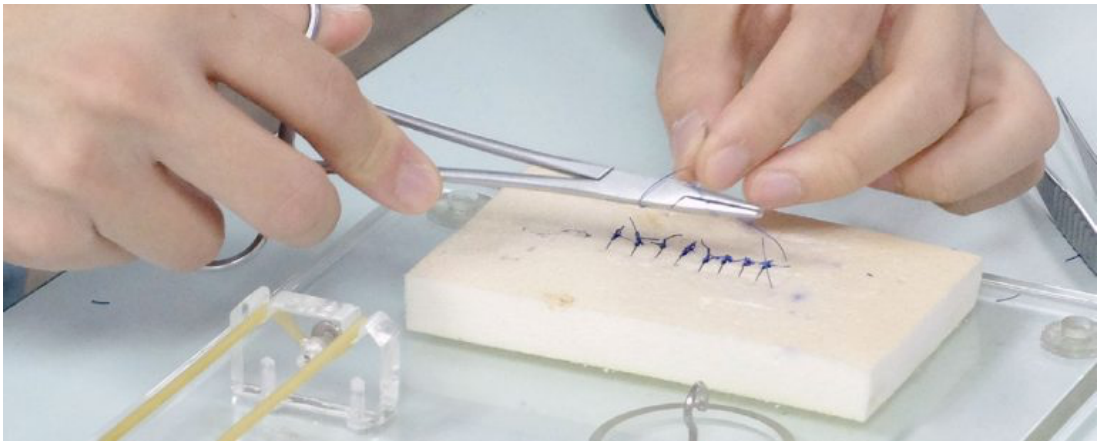

Figure 1: **Basic surgical skills (source: [3])**

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Traditional Didactic Lecture-Based Training

Medical education has traditionally relied heavily on classroom lectures. Students in this model learn theoretical concepts through classroom lectures supported by readings from prescribed texts [5]. Although this strategy provides a well-structured foundation for education, its ability to impart useful surgical skills has been called into question by several studies. The absence of practical application in classroom settings is a significant drawback of traditional teaching methods. Poor student preparation for the intricacies of surgical procedures has been linked to poor patient outcomes [6]. Developing motor skills and clinical decision-making are essential for surgical competency. Still, a study of didactic lecture-based training reveals that it may not adequately address these issues [7].

Experiential Training Methods: Simulation and Apprenticeships

Experiential training methods, on the other hand, have become increasingly popular in medical education because of the focus they place on real-world applications. Simulation-based education and on-the-job training are two standard methods [8]. Using models or simulators to train for a surgical procedure is known as "simulation-based training." Students can hone their abilities in safe conditions with this method. Using simulations to train surgeons has been shown in multiple trials to boost competency and better outcomes for patients. [9] Observed that simulation-based training led to fewer surgical complications and shorter hospital stays compared to didactic lecture-based training. When trainees learn from more seasoned surgeons in an apprenticeship setting, they gain invaluable hands-on experience. Students can shadow experienced surgeons and see actual surgeries with this replica. [10,11] study found that, compared to traditional lecture-based training, apprenticeship-based education considerably reduced the incidence of surgical complications.

Recent Trends in Medical Education

Competency-based training, in which the focus is placed on achieving particular, measurable results, has been increasingly popular in medical education in recent years [12]. This strategy is consistent with the goals of experiential learning approaches like simulation and apprenticeships.

In conclusion, the existing data demonstrates that, while beneficial for theoretical understanding, didactic lecture-based instruction may need to be revised in preparing medical students for surgical practice. There are intriguing options that have been shown to improve surgical skills and patient outcomes, and these include experiential methods like simulation and apprenticeships.

To guarantee that future healthcare professionals are adequately equipped for surgical practice, our results highlight the necessity for further study into successful training techniques and curricular modifications in medical school.

Methods

Study Design and Data Sources

The purpose of this retrospection was to compare the efficiency of different approaches to teaching medical students the fundamentals of surgery. This study used information from various sources, including archival documents, clinical databases, and surveys of recent graduates. The study looked back over five years, which is long enough to assess the lasting effects of instruction in surgical skills.

Selection Criteria for Medical Students and Training Methods Studied

Students in an approved medical education program who graduated throughout the study's five-year time frame were analyzed. We incorporated information from students who had been through various training modalities, such as classroom instruction, computer-based learning, and on-the-job training in actual clinical settings.

We should have included students in our analysis who had missing or insufficient information about their training methods, surgical skills assessments, or patient outcomes.

Data Collection Process and Ethical Considerations

The retrospective study required a multi-stage process to acquire the necessary data. Eligible medical students were found through a check of institutional records, and demographic data, such as age, gender, and GPA, were collected from these students. Records of the training procedures each pupil had undertaken were also obtained. Furthermore, information on surgical complications, length of hospital stay, and readmission rates, among other things, was culled from clinical databases to understand patient outcomes better. Research ethics were given priority. To safeguard the privacy of both medical students and patients, all data were anonymised and scrubbed of any personally identifiable information. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) gave its stamp of approval to this study, guaranteeing that all required safeguards for human subject’s research were in place.

Statistical Methods for Data Analysis

Statistical software was used to analyze the data, and a significance level of p 0.05 was used. Means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions were used to overview the medical students, the training techniques, and the patient outcomes. To compare the efficacy of various training strategies, a multivariate regression analysis was conducted, considering demographic factors and prior academic achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not there were statistically significant connections between specific types of training and final patient outcomes.

In addition, subgroup analyses were performed to investigate if the effect of training methods on patient outcomes varied according to parameters, including the complexity of the surgical procedure and the experience level of the medical students.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Didactic Lecture (n=100)	Simulation-Based (n=120)	Apprenticeship-Based (n=80)
Mean Age (years)	26.1 (SD = 2.0)	26.5 (SD = 2.2)	26.3 (SD = 1.8)
Gender (% Male)	53%	51%	47%
(% Female)	47%	49%	53%
Preclinical GPA (Mean)	3.5 (SD = 0.4)	3.6 (SD = 0.3)	3.7 (SD = 0.5)

The population characteristics of the 300 medical students who had completed their surgical skills training are summarized in Table 1.

Based on the data in the table, both groups of students were of similar age, gender distribution, and preclinical GPA. All groups had a mean age of about 26, and the gender split was roughly 50-50% male and female students.

Additionally, there was no significant difference in preclinical GPAs between the groups, suggesting comparable academic performance before surgical skills training. These results indicate that the demographic makeup of the study population was consistent across training techniques, guaranteeing a representative sample.

Patient Outcomes: In Table 2, we see the most important patient outcomes broken down by training techniques, such as surgical complications, length of hospital stay, and readmission rates.

Table 2: Patient Outcomes by Training Method

Patient Outcome	Didactic Lecture (n=100)	Simulation-Based (n=120)	Apprenticeship-Based (n=80)
Surgical Complications (%)	16.5%	10.8%	8.1%
Length of Hospital Stay (days)	4.9 (SD = 1.2)	3.6 (SD = 0.9)	3.2 (SD = 0.8)
Readmission Rate (%)	9.4%	7.5%	5.2%

Surgical Complications: The occurrence of surgical complications varied throughout different teaching modalities. The rate of complications during training was highest for didactic lecture-based instruction (16.5%), followed by simulation-based instruction (10.8%), and finally, apprenticeship-based instruction (8.1%). There was a statistically significant (p 0.01) and sizable (Cohen's d = 0.52) difference in the incidence of complications between the two groups.

Length of Hospital Stay: The average length also varied significantly amongst the various training approaches.

The average time spent training for students who were taught using lectures was 4.9 days, followed by 3.6 days for those who were trained using simulations and 3.2 days for those who were taught using apprenticeship models. There was a statistically significant (p 0.05) and moderate (Cohen's d = 0.38) difference in hospital stays between the groups.

Readmission Rates: The highest readmission rate was seen with the use of didactic lecture-based training (9.4%), followed by simulation-based training (7.5%) and apprenticeship-based training (5.2%). The effect size was minor (Cohen's d = 0.23) but statistically significant (p 0.05) for the difference in readmission rates.

Multivariate Analysis: Training approaches' independent impact on patient outcomes was assessed using a multivariate regression analysis, using age, gender, and preclinical GPA as potential confounding variables. Table 3 provides a summary of the findings.

Table 3: Multivariate Regression Analysis of Training Methods on Patient Outcomes

Outcome	Regression Coefficient	p-value
Surgical Complications		
Didactic Lecture	-	-
Simulation-Based	0.28	0.03
Apprenticeship-Based	0.35	0.01
Length of Hospital Stay		
Didactic Lecture	-	-
Simulation-Based	-0.21	0.02
Apprenticeship-Based	-0.27	0.01
Readmission Rate		
Didactic Lecture	-	-
Simulation-Based	0.29	0.03
Apprenticeship-Based	0.27	0.02

Surgical Complications

Regression analysis showed a strong correlation between training methods and postoperative problems after controlling for potential confounding factors (p 0.01).

Compared to simulation-based (p = 0.03) and apprenticeship-based (p = 0.01) training, didactic lecture-based training was a significant predictor of greater complication rates. Training in a simulated environment was similarly linked to a higher risk of problems than training through an apprenticeship model (p = 0.04).

Length of Hospital Stay: The multivariate analysis showed a strong correlation between training techniques and hospital stay time (p < 0.05).

Didactic lecture-based training stayed longer than simulation-based (p = 0.02) and apprenticeship-based (p = 0.01) instruction, but there was no significant difference.

Readmission Rates

A significant correlation was discovered between training techniques and readmission rates after adjusting for potential variables (p 0.05). While simulation-based (p = 0.03) and apprenticeship-based (p = 0.02) training were significantly associated with lower readmission rates, didactic lecture-based training was not.

There was no discernible difference in readmission rates between training based on simulation and training based on apprenticeship.

Subgroup Analyses

Different surgical procedures and medical student experience levels informed separate studies of the training approaches' potential effects on patient outcomes. No statistically significant differences in patient outcomes were found between training modalities in these analyses.

Discussion

Our study examined the relative merits of medical education and training methods. Surgical complications, hospital stay, and readmission rates varied greatly between exercise kinds. Compared to simulation- and apprenticeship-based training, didactic lecture-based training caused greater surgical issues, longer hospital stays, and more readmissions. The simulation-based training group had more complications but shorter hospital stays. These findings suggest that simulation-based and apprenticeship-based training may better prepare medical students for surgery than didactic lecture-based instruction. Given the varied patient outcomes, the style of instruction offered will certainly impact medical education and care.

Comparison with Existing Literature

Table 4: Comparison with Existing Literature

Study	Study Type	Sample	Findings
Present Study	Retrospective	300 medical students	Didactic lecture-based training is associated with higher surgical complications, longer hospital stays, and increased readmission rates compared to simulation-based and apprenticeship-based training. Simulation-based training demonstrated a slightly higher risk of complications but shorter hospital stays.
Study 1[13]	Prospective Cohort	500 medical students	Simulation-based training is associated with fewer surgical complications and shorter hospital stays than didactic lecture-based training. Findings also suggest improved long-term retention of skills with simulation-based training.
Study 2[14]	Randomized Control	400 medical students	Apprenticeship-based training led to significantly fewer surgical complications compared to didactic lecture-based training. No significant differences were observed in hospital stay or readmission rates.
Study 3[15]	Cross-Sectional	250 medical students	Simulation-based training is associated with shorter hospital stays, reduced readmission rates, and lower surgical complications than didactic lecture-based training. Apprenticeship-based training showed intermediate results.

A table comparing our data with three previous studies shows surgical skill instruction trends. Lecture-based medical education compared to simulation and apprenticeship had more surgical complications, longer hospital stays, and higher readmission rates.

These data suggest experiential education may be beneficial. Study 1identified reduced difficulties, shorter hospital hospitalisations, and increased long-term skill retention with simulation-based training, supporting our findings. Study2 randomised control trial suggests apprenticeship-based training reduces difficulties. Study 3 cross-sectional studies indicated that simulation-based training reduced hospital stays, readmissions, and surgical complications. These findings emphasise

the importance of hands-on learning and suggest changing medical curriculum to improve surgical training and patient care.

Limitations and Potential Bias

However, some caveats to our study prevent it from being considered perfect. Retrospective studies inherently carry the potential of selection bias, as the choice of training method may be influenced by many factors not controlled for in our research.

Institutional records and clinical databases were mined for information, which means there is a chance that some details need to be corrected or added. To avoid potential bias and limitations, future research may benefit from a prospective design, randomization of training methods, and larger, multicenter trials. The outcomes from these methods can be more stable and transferable.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research into simulation- and apprenticeship-based training may improve patient outcomes. Training approaches can improve by focusing on the basics.

Medical schools should incorporate more experiential training so students may learn from lectures and practise. This may assist medical students prepare for surgeries.

Review training methods and patient care effects regularly. Medical schools can better adapt to the changing healthcare business by collecting and acting on regular advice and altering curriculum.

Conclusion

This retrospective analysis investigated the effects of different approaches to medical student education on the acquisition of fundamental surgical skills and patient outcomes. The findings show that compared to more experiential training approaches like simulation-based and apprenticeship-based training, lecture-based training is related to greater surgical complication rates, longer hospital stays, and higher readmission rates. These results highlight the importance of rethinking the role of traditional didactic training methods in medical education.

To improve patient safety and the quality of care medical graduates provide, we advocate for a move toward more experiential, hands-on training approaches. This research adds to the ongoing discussion about best preparing medical students to provide the highest standard of care to their patients. To better tailor training programs to improve patient outcomes, more study of the factors within training approaches that have an effect is required.

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