DISCOURSE THROUGH PHOTOVOICE: INTERACTION BETWEEN MEDICAL STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to help medical students during the interaction of people with epilepsy, to learn more about "lived experience", and find out more about patients' voices. Design/methodology/approach - photovoice is a qualitative method that combines pictures and narratives in exploring "lived experience" of people with epilepsy, patients' and students' voices. Results. Patients with epilepsy voices allow students to understand the discourse between insiders and outsiders, the differences between professional language and conversation among professionals.

Keywords. Photovoice, discourse, epilepsy.

Introduction

Medical education system is generally understood as professionals' training at an educational institution and practicum learning site. Different environment, people, and health problems allow medical students to gain practical experience. Students employ their theoretical background and professionals' help to find the solution in real practical workplace. Historically, doctors had been teachers for many years, but they had little knowledge how to teach students. Erlich and Shayghnessy (2014) distinguish two key critical elements of success. First, interleaving sessions devoted to didactic educational principles where practical teaching experience with actual students in a real course, and second, direct faculty guidance in developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teaching. Peer teaching is one of the suggested methods in accordance with this concept. Currently students' teaching models, such as peer teaching, are very effective because " ...they use accessible language to describe concepts and relate to the feeling of being novice". Peer teacher personal, from similar social groups, who is not a professional teacher helps others to learn and learn themselves by teaching (Erlich *et al.*, 2014). Through the teaching process students' experiences remain unknown because the teacher can observe students only during sessions and the teacher uses professional language which could be evaluated. People with epilepsy often have cognitive limitations, special needs and a doctor has to transform people' language into the professional language. How students transform nonprofessional language? What is the impact of people with epilepsy voices on students' professional language? What is students' experience?

Photovoice is one of the methods allowing to hear the voice of people with epilepsy. Through the photos and stories community members can identify important issues and acquire knowledge about what is meaningful for the community but not for teachers (Teti *et al.*, 2012; Heyns *et al.*, 2016). Photovoice often is used to draw attention on society, otherwise, the following method can change opinion of the community members and environment.

The Photovoice Method

Photovoice is a community-based participatory research method which enables combining visuals and narrative to disclose what is meaningful for the community (Luo, 2016). The project members included people with epilepsy and medical students which were divided into 8 groups. Project members decided to demonstrate "lived experience" of epilepsy. It was all members' decision to expose that epilepsy is not an illness but life with it. 5 workshops were organized during the project. The project was conducted in processing steps considering Luo (2016): determining the problem to

be explored (1), identifying the community members to participate in the project (2), introductory meeting (3), training (4), photo taking (5), facilitated discussion (6), analysis (7), exhibition (8), debrief (9). The first step in this project was to identify the problem and to focus only on the problems concerning epilepsy.

Each project member had to present his / her opinion on the idea of the project and to plan next workshops. Project members named the project "I Am as You Are". It is very important that not only people with epilepsy, but each student could talk and express himself / herself. Discussions were organized after each workshop and project members prepared reflections in written form. The project members combined visuals and stories to show social aspects of epilepsy, stigmatization problems, epilepsy and work, need of social assistance. The duration of the project took 6 weeks and after the project an exhibition was arranged.

Results

Yamani *et al.* (2016) described that application of active teaching strategies, meaningful learning and integration of conceptual and practical knowledge are the core of curriculum. In this context the core curriculum is understood as a focal point for training teachers and as a basis for describing specific objectives. Practical knowledge about problems of people with epilepsy were explained by teacher, but about the symptoms of the illness and arising social problems students heard from people with epilepsy. Students indicated the project as an innovative teaching method, without having previous experience. Innovations at all levels of medical education allow to develop a curriculum and to do revisions in medical education (Yamani *et al.*, 2016). It is important to remember that innovations could be evolutionary and revolutionary. Students noted that this project enabled them to change opinion and they started to think more critically. Innovative education maintains learners' autonomy, self-efficacy, critical thinking and creativity (Serdyukov, 2017).

Hjelm (2013) described learning through discourse analysis like directing a critical gaze at learning with discourse analysis process itself.

All the project members decided to choose 3 photos and to write stories. Peer work was divided into two stages: individual and group work. At first, students were outsiders and tried to discover the difference between professional language and conversation among people with epilepsy.

During the research ethnographic focus on examining what is insider or emic was used. Agar (2006) argues, that culture is realized through language and a newcomer brings his / her own languaculture. This logic enquiry let us understand that every group member defines his / her situation during interactions (Markee, 2015). Insiders' knowledge is unprofessional, and it depends on "lived experience", social constructs were made not only during insiders' interactions. Outsiders, professionals, joined the group and interacted with insiders: whole group tried to make notes and choose photos. During the discussions students clarified all the information they acquired from people with epilepsy and the amount of information they did not hear. The teacher had been waiting for each answer as long as possible. Ingram *et al.* (2014) argues that extending waiting time or not, is a part of toolkit for improving the quality of a dialogue. The teacher usually had to wait at least three seconds for an answer and it is not a productive strategy (Ingram *et al.*, 2014). Language begins with the start of thinking, but sometimes people pronounce different words depending on the context. Language helps to construct social situations. This situation changed social construction of narrative stories. Outsiders used professional language within their group and tried to understand insiders' "lived experience". Working with outsiders and insiders is always precautions because: "...people initially join groups and learn at the periphery (as outsiders) even though they have immediate connections with the group" (Hart, 2013).

Reflective writing is one of the methods which is used for helping students to enhance self-awareness and helps gaining an understanding of the perspectives of others have been created. Reflection helps to explore experiences and these experiences help students to enhance their

psychological well-being and their abilities to empathize with patients and themselves by enabling them to access and accept their feelings. Language changes could be the result in deepened critical thinking (Lin *et al.*, 2016).

Language helps to translate internal thoughts and emotions to others and reflective writing could show us how students use language to construct their narratives and effective communication (Lin *et al.*, 2016). Lin *et al.* (2016) suggested for teachers to enable students to see and hear what happens in the interactions of patients and their family members and interpreted the training purposes: "...medical students should be encouraged to enhance their empathetic understanding of the psychosocial issues in patients and illness by becoming aware of expressing their affective experience...". Common learning experience is essential for medical students to achieve clinical competencies (Yamani *et al.*, 2016). These educational programs help students to analyze different psychological processes and this is challenging for all participants. Hjelm *et al.* (2013) explained that learning through discourse gives possibility for students and teachers to engage in critical reflection of the process while doing analysis. The discourse of classroom interaction constructs knowledge. Students during this project obtained knowledge about themselves and teamwork, group reflection. Medical students learning process is individual and not only directed to knowledge about people with epilepsy.

Conclusions

Photovoice, as peer teaching method, was experienced by medical students as innovative, creative and effective method which allowed students to understand epilepsy in biopsychosocial consequences. Visual narratives enabled to see how and what was learned about epilepsy by the project members.

Project members learned about people with epilepsy from live stories. Students acquired knowledge about discrimination, surrounding environment, insensibility for people with epilepsy. During the studies process students learned about different types of epilepsy. Though working in groups like outsiders and after the project they broaden the understanding that each case is unique, different, and unpredictable. Students learned how initiate the contact and how to maintain this close professional contact with people having epilepsy. People with epilepsy sometimes disincline to talk about their problems because of power balance. It is very important for students to collaborate and to seek for the aim together.

Photovoice method enables students to see and hear what happens during interactions between them and patients. In order to construct epilepsy-narrative in comprehensive way, which includes medical and non-medical understanding and experiencing of illness, it is essential to enhance their empathetic interaction and transform professional outsiders' language into understandable language for insiders (patients).

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