

Comments on: Development and introduction of a communication skills module for postgraduate students of ophthalmology

Dear Editor,

We would like to thank Bhagat *et al.* for their article highlighting the need for structured training in communication skills for postgraduate ophthalmology students.^[1] While reassured by the effectiveness of their proposed teaching model, we found

it surprising to read that there is a lack of communication skills teaching currently within medical school curricula.

Despite communication skills being a key competency of the proficient clinician, the authors report they are not formally taught during medical school. Our review of the literature has yielded contrasting results. We found a breadth of research indicating that communication skills teaching is both widely incorporated in medical school curricula and also has a well-established evidence base.^[2,3]

However, there is little to indicate that this type of training occurs beyond medical school. The authors of the current study

acknowledge this issue and therefore propose their model of communication skills teaching for postgraduate trainees. Although the model is proven effective for the observed cohort, they conclude that it should be incorporated into undergraduate medical curricula. While we agree that communication skills should play an important role in medical school, we are uncertain whether the results of this study can support the model being incorporated into undergraduate education. Moreover, the authors do not explain why this teaching is unsuitable for postgraduate students, despite demonstrating such high satisfaction rates. In fact, many argue that ongoing communications teaching and consolidation of learning is essential to postgraduate training.^[4] This is especially important as both students and residents only retain the learnt skills for around two years following didactic teaching.^[5]

To summarize, it is our view that there is currently sufficient teaching of communications skills in medical schools. However, we agree with Bhagat *et al.* that further development of communication skills teaching for postgraduate students is also required.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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