

Using metaphor in clinical
supervision:
An effective method of teaching
the art of clinical practice

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Clinical Supervision

- What works?
- How?
- And why?

The ART of Clinical Practice

- Practice epistemology
- Practice Knowledge
 - Propositional to non-propositional knowledge
 - Pathic and personal

Clinical Education

- The practice of supporting a student to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes in a clinical practice setting.
- A teaching and learning process
 - Clinical reasoning
 - Professional identity
 - Lifelong learning

Clinical Reasoning Challenges

- Abstract theoretical concepts
- Limited or no experience with clinical phenomena
- Complexity
- Inductive and deductive formulations
- Thoughtful action

What works? - Metaphor

- Metaphor is defined as a figure of speech used to deliberately compare two dissimilar phenomena
- Creative implicit comparison derived from non-analytical thinking as a word used to designate a familiar thing is used to designate something unfamiliar

Metaphor in Clinical Supervision

- Metaphor has a long history in clinical education and has stood the test of time
- Historically used to communicate signs and pathology before the dawn of diagnostic imaging
- Clinical education is “not simply a process of transmission of knowledge and skills, but rather the creative interpretation of curriculum content and process.....this creative element is largely achieved through metaphor comprehension and process” (Bleakley, 2017, p 128)

How Metaphor Works

- Used consciously and deliberately
 - “By simply being mindful” (Reisfield and Wilson, 2004, p.4024)
- Conceptual tools
- Source/root domain correspondences to target domain
 - From most concrete to most abstract
- Interaction between two semantic fields
 - Set of mappings
 - Novel meanings generated

Metaphor in Clinical Education

- Theory to practice
 - Epistemological gap
- Professional identity
 - Identity
 - Socialisation
- Critical thinking
- Clinical reasoning

Why Metaphor works

- “The acquisition of (metaphorically mediated) knowledge is per definition an interpretative activity embedded in patterns of action” (Botha, 2009, p 440)
- Metaphors “transpose from a conceptual state to a physical state, or embody a thought...afford tangibility (Bleakley, 2017, p 124)

Metaphoric Teaching Activities

- Encouraging students to develop their own interpretations
 - Story/verbal metaphor
 - Visual metaphor
- Metaphoric drawing activities
- Instructional metaphor

Conclusion

- Metaphor is an effective method for teaching complex or elusive medical concepts
- Appropriate, well chosen metaphors aid student learning and recall
- The use of conscious and deliberate metaphoric teaching activities can support effective supervision and enhance student learning

References

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- Reisfield, G.M. and Wilson, G.R. (2004). Use of metaphor in the discourse on cancer. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 22(19), 4024-4027