Response to: Considerations for Applying Six Strategies for Effective Learning to Instruction

Umar Al-haddad¹

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Dear Editor,

The article by Nebel [1] on the six strategies for effective learning was a very interesting and enlightening read. As a medical student intercalating in a Social Science Masters, I believe these strategies are applicable regardless of the area of study and should be used as a model for students to adopt in order to study efficiently.

However, these strategies are simply theoretical; and the practical implementation of these strategies is what many students find challenging. The evidence of learning strategies in the literature is compelling, and many students know these strategies; yet they do not know how to practically implement them in their studies. Thus, learning strategies highlighted in this article concerns questions not of “what do we know?” (problems of evidence) but of “what should we do?” (problems of action). Students need guidance in implementing these learning strategies, particularly when studying a new subject with a different style of teaching to one they are not used to.

This was evident when I conducted a small non-published study on first year medical students investigating their learning methods prior to medical school compared to their first year of medical school. A total of 80% of students voiced that they did not know how to study in medical school, largely attributing it to the style of teaching (university-style lecture teaching compared to college-style classroom teaching). I was also interested to find out whether medical schools hosted a session for first year medical students at the start of their studies explaining the different theories and strategies of learning and how to practically implement them. Since the students surveyed were from five different medical schools, the pooled results showed that four out of five medical schools did not

host a session of similar sort. This is no surprise as published research indicates that students expect to be taught via formal lectures, but it is the least wanted and preferred method of teaching [2]. With no other alternative, and students failing to swiftly adapt their learning methods to suit university-style teaching, the challenge is on educators and institutions to formally introduce study sessions as part of the curriculum which guides students on how to study effectively using these learning strategies.

Practical implementation of these learning strategies has the potential to inspire students to consistently perform well in assessments, as well as reducing the stress in trying to adapt to new learning curves. Embedding study sessions in the curriculum may be a starting point for this practical implementation.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate NA

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

References

1. Nebel C. Considerations for applying six strategies for effective learning to instruction. *Med Sci Educ.* 2020;30(S1):9–10.
2. Sander P, Stevenson K, King M, Coates D. University students' expectations of teaching. *Stud High Educ.* 2000;25(3):309–23.

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✉ Umar Al-haddad
u.al-haddad@hotmail.co.uk

¹ Newcastle University Faculty of Medical Sciences, The Medical School, Newcastle University, Framlington Place, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4HH, UK