

“Teaching is Learning” in periodontal treatment for dental hygiene students

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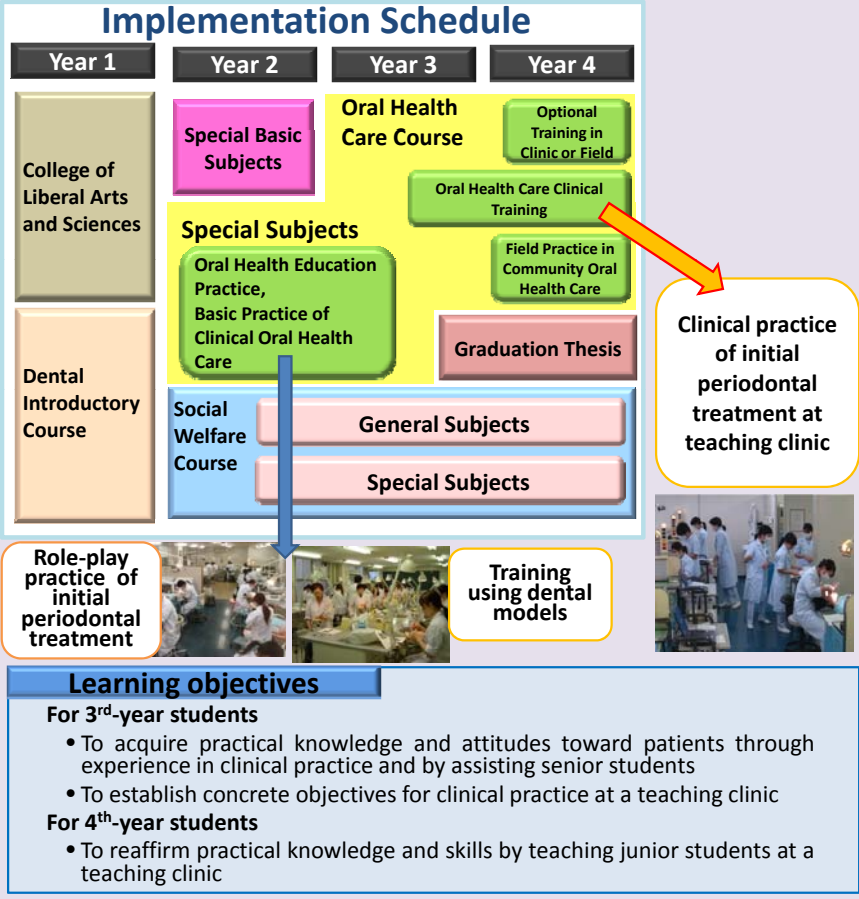
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BACKGROUND

In the educational system known as “Teaching is Learning,” senior students teach junior students. This is a well-known method to deepen senior students’ understanding and to motivate junior students to learn. In dental hygiene education, clinical experience at an early stage is a good opportunity to acquire not only practical knowledge but also communication skills and attitudes that will be beneficial in developing good relationships with patients. For this reason, we developed an experiential clinical practice based on “Teaching is Learning” in which senior students practicing on patients at our teaching clinic teach junior (pre-clinical) students in dental hygiene education such as initial periodontal treatment. The aim of this study was to investigate the “Teaching is Learning” practice using a questionnaire.

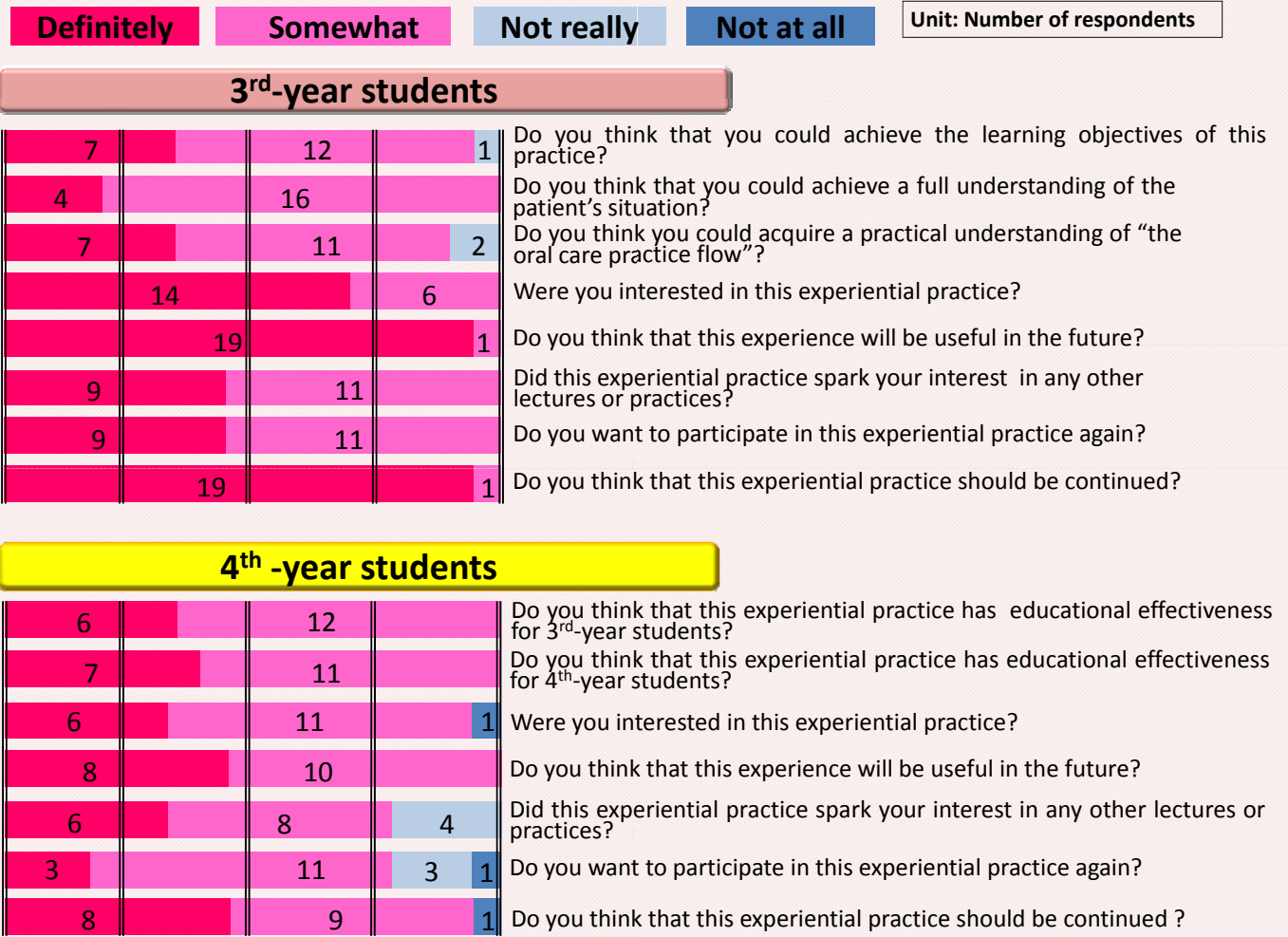


METHOD

An anonymous questionnaire asking subjects to evaluate the experiential clinical practice was administered to 20 3rd-year and 18 4th-year students at the School of Oral Health Sciences, Tokyo Medical and Dental University in 2009.



RESULTS



COMMENTS FROM 3rd-YEAR STUDENTS

- The practice could have been implemented much earlier.
- The practice enabled me to establish my own objectives.
- It was a good opportunity for me to experience a realistic, tension-filled clinical setting.
- I was able to understand the actual flow of clinical practice and learned many things by assisting senior students.

COMMENTS FROM 4th-YEAR STUDENTS

- Teaching junior students enabled me to reaffirm my knowledge.
- The practice was implemented only once, which was not enough.
- It was a good opportunity for me to reconsider my own clinical knowledge and skills.
- I felt a little nervous at being watched by junior students.
- There was not enough time to explain things to junior students adequately.



DISCUSSION

The results indicate that most dental hygiene students evaluated the “Teaching is Learning” practice highly for periodontal treatment. All 3rd-year students were interested in the practice. In addition, the practice allowed them to identify their own tasks and establish concrete objectives. This experiential practice was therefore considered to enhance junior students’ attitudes and willingness to learn. Although a few 4th-year students gave negative evaluations, all 4th-year students responded that the experiential practice was educationally effective. Furthermore, the 4th-year students indicated that the experience of teaching junior students would be useful in the future and that it should be continued. The practice was implemented only once in 2009 due to curriculum design, and as some students requested earlier or multiple implementations, it is necessary to improve and enhance this practice on the basis of the present findings.

CONCLUSION

The present results suggest that “Teaching is Learning” in periodontal treatment among dental hygiene students is effective in promoting beneficial educational behaviors.