"What Do I See, Hear, and Smell When I Walk Into the Room?" A Team-Based Learning Curriculum for Emergency Medicine Oral Board Exam Preparation

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**BACKGROUND**

The ABEM oral board examination is an intimidating hurdle that all emergency medicine (EM) physicians must pass in order to become board certified. A needs assessment of one program’s EM residents yielded satisfaction with the “hot seat” experience of practicing for the oral board exam; however, those not in the “hot seat” felt disengaged from the process and subsequently less prepared. Thus, we sought to use a team-based learning (TBL) approach for all residents to practice the application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to successfully navigate the EM oral board exam and receive immediate feedback regarding their performance.

**TBL SESSION DESIGN**

This curricular intervention is based upon key principles of learning theory applied through the instructional format of TBL. The curriculum consists of quarterly oral board exam sessions interwoven as a station within each EM residency simulation day. These TBL sessions include 1) pre-work from free open-access medical education (FOAMed) resources meeting predetermined quality standards for blogs and podcasts as determined by residency faculty using validated scoring metrics; 2) the individual and group readiness assessment tests (IRAT and GRAT); 3) two oral board exam cases with one resident in the “hot seat” for each; 4) group debriefing; and 5) a team application session at the end of the simulation day where all four groups discuss key issues and controversies from the cases through various team synthesis exercises. Topics are interleaved throughout the year and are intentionally discordant with the current topic of conference to provide a more realistic oral board exam experience. Additionally, by having these sessions on a quarterly basis, spaced repetition will allow for repeated practice of the oral board exam format prior to the actual event.

**LEARNING THEORY**

Retrieval practice requires the learner to write or sketch everything he or she knows about a specific topic. We incorporate this in the team application exercise by having the groups use mind mapping to determine the critical actions of each oral boards case and then check their responses with one another in the reporting out session.

Spaced repetition is utilized to improve information recall in preparation for an exam. By spacing out your studying and recalling the format and content of the exam at regular intervals, you are more likely to perform well on the actual exam. Thus, we space these sessions out quarterly so that our residents have to recall the format of the oral board exam and the most commonly tested content on a routine basis in preparation for the real thing.

Survival of information while studying is best when you do not study the same thing continuously for too long. Interleaving topics allows you to remember information in the future. We do this by interleaving topics for TBL. We take this one step further by intentionally making the oral boards cases discordant from the conference theme to more closely replicate the actual oral board exam.

**SAMPLE TBL SESSION**

1. **Pre-Work:** EM Cases podcast on pediatric abdominal pain and appendicitis
2. **Individual Readiness Assessment (IRAT):** Individual readiness quiz regarding the content of the podcast
3. **Group Readiness Assessment (GRAT):** Group readiness assessment regarding pediatric abdominal pain and associated disorders
4. **Oral Board Cases:** Two oral boards cases – one with a septic toddler with intussusception and one with a vomiting neonate who has suffered non-accidental trauma
5. **Group Debriefing:** The groups discuss the cases together
6. **Team Application Exercise:** The team application exercise has the groups use mind mapping to determine the critical actions of each case
7. **Follow-Up Work:** In follow-up, each group must use published quality metrics for blogs and podcasts to find and send a FOAMed resource to their co-residents that ties back to something from the cases

**OUTCOMES TO DATE**

Initial results demonstrate improved resident satisfaction with the oral board exam curriculum and comfort with the oral board exam format. Additionally, residents demonstrated a secondary outcome of improved critical appraisal skills regarding FOAMed resources as part of the TBL pre-work and follow-up exercise.

**CITATIONS**